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My Lesson Of Love

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The Lesson of Love

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New York

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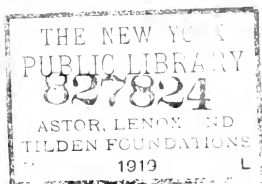
J. R. MILLER, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "SILENT TIMES," "THE UPPER
CURRENTS," "IN PERFECT PEACE," ETC., ETC.

*"As every love hue is light,
So every grace is love."*

New York

THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.
PUBLISHERS



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Published, September, 1903

PREFACE

To *learn how to love is to learn how to live. The lesson is a long one, but it is the great business of life to master it. The Master not only taught the lesson in words, but also set it down for us in a life, his own life. To follow Christ is to practise this great lesson, learning more of it day by day, until school is out and we go home.*

J. R. M.

Philadelphia, U. S. A.

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The Lesson of Love

*For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear . . .
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,—
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.*

—ROBERT BROWNING.

CHAPTER FIRST

CHRISTIAN love has to be learned. There is natural affection which does not need to be learned—the love of parents for children, of children for parents, of friend for friend. But it is not natural to love our enemies, to love unlovable people, to be unselfish, to return kindness for unkindness. We have to learn this love, and it is the great business of life to do it.

The lesson is written out for us in many parts of the Scriptures. We have it, for example, in Saint Paul's wonderful chapter on love. It includes patience. "Love suffereth long." It is not easy to live with all sorts of people and to keep sweet always. In a letter from a friend the problem is stated thus: "How to live victoriously when one does not feel well, has many tasks and duties, and must

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work with a cranky person.” That is about the problem for many good people, and it is not easy. There is only one way of solving it—by love. And natural love will not suffice. Some mothers solve it with their children. Some gentle wives solve it with exacting, thoughtless, ungente husbands. Now and then a friend solves it with a friend to whom it is not easy to be a friend. But the Christian is to learn to solve it with every kind of person—however disagreeable, unlovable, and uncongenial—he is never to come to the end of his loving. It takes almost infinite patience to love thus, more, at least, than many of us can command.

Love is kind. Kindness has been called the small coin of love. It is not shown in large deeds so much as in countless little gentle things. Jesus wrought a few great miracles, but in between the miracles, all the days, hours, and minutes were filled with kindnesses, little words and acts and looks which no one counted. Love should always abound in kindnesses. Our love should not be kept for great things,

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but should flow out continually, like fragrance from a flower, as part of our own life. Love is not something to be added to a busy life, as some men have their avocations to which they turn to rest them from their great vocations.

*“ Most men know love but as a part of life ;
They hide it in some corner of the breast
Even from themselves ; and only when they rest,
In the brief pauses of that earthly strife
Wherewith our world might else be not so rife,
They draw it forth . . .
And hold it up to mother, child, or wife.
Ah me ! Why may not life and love be one ? ”*

Love is generous. It “envieth not.” We have learned the lesson well only when we can rejoice in the joy of others. This is quite as much a part of true love’s sympathy as it is to share the griefs of others. “Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep.” We can do the latter more easily than the former. When we find one in misfortune or in trouble, it is not hard to sympathize with him. But when others are honored more than

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we are, or prospered more, or when they win success while we fail, or are very happy while we are less so, is it as easy for us to be genuinely glad as it would be to be really sorry if they were in some kind of grief?

Love is unselfish. It "seeketh not its own." Unselfishness is at the very heart of all true love. It is the obtruding of self into our thoughts, feelings, and acts that spoils much of our living. We love people until it would cost us something to continue to love them and then we stop short. We accept serious responsibility when we say to anyone: "I will be your friend." That is what Jesus said to his friends, and then he loved to the uttermost. That is what "seeketh not its own" means. It may cost us years of self-denial and exhausting service.

Love keeps sweet amid all irritation. It "is not provoked." It probably is too much to hope for in this world of infirmity and sinfulness, that one shall ever attain a condition in life in which there shall be nothing that would naturally excite bitter or unkindly feeling.

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Indeed, we could not learn to be sweet-tempered with nothing to test and exercise our temper. The problem then is not to find a paradise of sweetness in which to live—we shall have to wait for Heaven for that—but in common human conditions, with infirmities and failings even in our best friends, with a thousand things in the experiences of each day to try our temper, still and always to keep sweet. Good temper is an admirable quality of love. For some people it is easier, too, than for others. But it is part of the lesson of love which we should all set ourselves to learn, whether it is easy or hard. It can be learned, too—it should be learned, for it is a Christian duty, one of the fruits of the Spirit, an essential element in Christian culture. We should never apologize for ill-temper as only an amiable weakness or a pardonable infirmity—we should be ashamed to yield to it. Touchy people should determine to conquer their wretched weakness and sin, by which God is dishonored, and the love of tender hearts hurt. George Macdonald speaks of the hurt of love:

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*Thou knowest, O Saviour, its hurt and its sorrows,
Didst rescue its joy by the might of thy pain :
Lord of all yesterdays, days and to-morrows,
Help us to love on in the hope of thy gain.*

Love is meek. That is what Saint Paul's words, "taketh no account of evil" seem to mean. It does not keep a list of slights, offences and injustices. "How often shall I forgive?" Peter asked. He thought he was going a long way in the path of Christian love when he suggested that seven times would be enough. But Jesus said: "Oh, not seven times only, but seventy times seven"—that is, indefinitely. Let your love be simply inexhaustible.

Nothing is harder than to have to endure wrong and ingratitude, to love and to have love unrequited. It is not easy to keep on loving when this is one's experience. Yet that is what our lesson teaches us. A writer tells a story of a man who had given up his whole life to love. Then there came a time when he knew that all he cared for was slipping away from him. At length after ten years of loving and serving, a letter came which told him

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that all he had cherished so tenderly was lost, that the life of those years was utterly blotted out. Yet though stunned by the blow, and left alone and desolate, he was not crushed, but went on with his life-work in quietness and hope.

When a friend asked him how he could take up a new life after such blighting disappointment, he said, "It was because I never lost love. Whatever happened to me, I went on loving; whatever change came in others, I was always constant to love. When the crash threw down my palace, though I was miserable, I was not embittered; though I was stripped of everything, my soul was still young; love had kept the springs of life flowing in my heart."

This is a secret which all of us should seek to learn. It is easy to let bitterness creep into the heart when one has to endure wrong day after day, week after week, possibly year after year. There are women who know what this means. There are men, too, who meet this experience. Too often the darkness creeps into their souls and puts out the lights of love.

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Nothing on earth is sadder than this. It is a sort of death that is worse than dying. Whatever wrongs or cruelties we have to endure we should always keep love in our hearts. We should never allow its lamps to be put out. We should keep on loving and thus be more than conquerors over all the hardness that besets us. In all such experiences love will save us, keep us alive—and nothing else will.

Sometimes one finds a sweet fresh-water spring beside the sea. When the tide is low you may take your cup and drink of the pure well and the water is fresh as if it flowed from the bosom of a rock on the hillside. Then the sea rolls over it and for long hours the brackish floods bury the little spring out of sight. But when the tide draws back again, you find the water sweet as ever. So love should be in our hearts when the black, brackish floods of wrong have swept over them. The love should never lose its sweetness.

Another quality of love to be learned is seeing the good and not the evil in others. That appears to be the meaning of the words, "Re-

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joiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; . . . believeth all things, hopeth all things.” There is in some people a disposition to see evil in others and even to be secretly glad of it. This is a satanic spirit. Our Lord’s counsel, “Judge not,” condemns it. We are not to put on our strongest glasses in order to look at others and see the flaws and faults in them. Rather we should turn our glasses on ourselves, to find our own defects, while we try to discover the good there is in our neighbor. It is amazing how some people are worried over other people’s defects and sins and how little concern meanwhile the unseemly things in themselves give them. In one of Swedenborg’s visions he saw “a hell where everybody is completely busy in making everybody else virtuous.” The irony of this vision is obvious and wholesome.

But that is not what Christian love does. It looks for the good in others and seeks to woo it out into something better. If only we would learn this lesson and think of finding the good in others, instead of the evil, covering all un-

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lovely things, hoping all beautiful things, how changed all life would be! How much nearer together we should be drawn if only we saw each other more clearly, more truly!

*“O God! that men would see a little clearer,
Or judge less harshly when they cannot see.
O God! that men might draw a little nearer
To one another. They'd be nearer thee.”*

These are parts of the great lesson. How can we learn it? Christ only can teach it to us. We must let the heaven-life enter our hearts. “When we were playing out in the barn to-day,” said Marjorie, “the sun shone in through a knot-hole high up in one of the boards, and it made a path, a golden path, away up. I guess if anybody could have walked up on it and slipped out where it came in, he would have found a road-way into heaven.”

The child's fancy was very beautiful. Christian love is like such a shining pencil of light breaking into our world through a rift in the sky. If we could walk up on it, we should find

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a foot-path into heaven. This love is heaven's life brought down to earth. Jesus Christ brought it down when he came. He was the first who ever loved in this way in our world. He wants all his followers to learn to love in the same way—"As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." He will teach us the lesson, if we will only learn it. When we have mastered it we are ready for heaven.

Things that are Lovely

*This was not the beauty—oh, nothing like this,
That to young Nourmahal gave such magic of bliss ;
But that loveliness, ever in motion, which plays
Like the light upon Autumn's soft shadowy days.*

*Now here and now there, giving warmth as it flies
From the lips to the cheek, from the cheek to the eyes ;
Now melting in mist and now breaking in gleams,
Like the glimpses a saint has of heaven in his dreams.*

—MOORE.

*My crown is in my heart, not on my head,
Nor decked with diamonds and Indian stones,
Nor to be seen : my crown is called content ;
A crown it is, that seldom kings enjoy.*

—SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER SECOND

Things that are Lovely



NOTHING that is not beautiful is fit for a place in a Christly life. Strength is essential, but strength need not be rugged and uncomely; art has learned to give it graceful form. Truth and honesty, justice and right are prime elements in a worthy life, but they need not be unbeautiful. Sometimes, it is true, we see men in whom these great qualities are strongly marked, yet in whom beauty is lacking. Some even boast of being blunt men, meaning that they say what they think, not caring how they may say it. But there is no reason why any sturdy quality of character should be wanting in loveliness. We may clothe the homeliest virtue in garments of grace. We may be honest and yet gentle and kindly. We may be true and live very sweetly.

In a cluster of "whatsoevers" indicating the

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principal qualities in an ideal character, Saint Paul includes "whatsoever things are lovely." Perhaps it has been too much the habit in Christian teachers to overlook beauty as an essential feature of a complete life. Christ, who is always to be our model, was "altogether lovely." He was strong, and true, and just, and righteous, but there was no flaw in his character, no defect in his life. We should never tolerate in ourselves anything that is not beautiful.

Some things are not lovely. There are ways that are not winning. There are people whose personality is not attractive. They fail to draw others to them. They neither make close friends nor keep friends. They may be good in the general fabric of their character—honest, truthful, upright, just. No one could condemn them or charge them with anything really wrong. Yet they are not lovable in their dispositions. There is something in them that hinders their popularity, that mars their influence, that interferes with their usefulness.

Things that are Lovely

Simplicity is one element in loveliness. Artificiality is never beautiful. There are many people who suffer greatly in their lives by reason of their affectations. They are unnatural in their manners. They seem always to be acting under the restraint of rules. It was said the other day of a good man that he talks even in common conversation as if he were delivering an oration. There are some who use a great deal of exaggerated language in complimenting their friends, even in expressing the most commonplace feelings. There are those whose very walk shows a studied air, as if they were conscious of a certain importance, a burden of greatness, thinking that wherever they appear everybody's eyes follow them with a sort of admiration and worship. All affectations in manner, in speech, in dress, in bearing, in disposition, are unlovely. They are classed with insincerities. Only the simple, unaffected, natural life is truly beautiful.

Selfishness is unlovely. It has many ways, too, of showing itself. Indeed, it cannot be hid—it crops out continually, in act and word

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and disposition. There are those who are disobliging, never willing to put themselves out to do a favor or to show a kindness to others. They may talk unselfishly, protesting their interest in people and their friendship for them, but when the test comes self asserts itself. Selfishness is simply the absence of love—love seeketh not its own. Unselfishness is lovely. It does not count the cost of serving. It loves unto the uttermost and never fails in helpfulness. It thinks of others, not only as of itself, but, like the Master, forgets itself altogether. This old lesson, old as the Christ himself, is rephrased in this fragment of conversation in one of Anthony Hope's books:

“ ‘Life isn't taking in only; it's giving out, too. And it's not giving out only words or deeds or things we've made. It's giving ourselves out, too—fully, freely.’ ”

“ ‘Giving ourselves out?’ ”

“ ‘Yes, to other people. Giving ourselves in comradeship, in understanding, in joy, in love. Fancy not having found that out before!’ ”

Another lovely attribute in the Christian

Things that are Lovely

life is peace. It never worries. It is never fretted. It is quiet, not noisy. It is the quality of a self-disciplined life. Hurry is always unbeautiful. The lovely life is never in haste, yet never loiters. It is self-poised. If women knew how much a quiet, self-controlled manner means in the making up of a winsome personality, they would seek for it more than for great riches. Nervous flurry, especially in a woman, is unlovely. It shows itself in flustered manners, in hasty and oftentimes rash speech, too often in ungoverned temper. The exhortation, "Be ambitious to be quiet," does not refer merely to speech, but especially to the inner spirit, to the manner, to the whole bearing of the life.

Nothing is lovelier in life than the spirit of contentment. Fretting mars the beauty of many a face. Discontent spoils all one's world. Out of whatever window he looks the discontented person sees something that is not pleasing. If there be a contented mind there is only good seen everywhere. The happiest homes in the world are not those in which are

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the finest carpets, the costliest pictures, the most luxurious furniture, but those in which glad, happy hearts dwell. A mind at rest glorifies the plainest surroundings and even the hardest conditions. Saint Paul was in a prison when he wrote: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." The secret was in himself.

"I once talked with a Rosicrucian about the Great Secret," said Addison. "He talked of it as a spirit that lived in an emerald, and converted everything that was near it to the highest perfection. 'It gives lustre to the sun,' he said, 'and water to the diamond. It irradiates every metal, and enriches lead with the property of gold. It brightens smoke into flame, flame into light, and light into glory. A single ray dissipates pain and care from the person on whom it falls.' Then I found his great secret was Content."

Love is the great master-secret of all beautiful things in character; love deals also with the manner of life's expression, as well as with its acts. Many good deeds are done in a very

Things that are Lovely

unbeautiful way. Some people do kindnesses in such an unfitting way that those they help wish they had not tried to help them. There is a great deal of thoughtlessness, too, in many people. They love their friends and are ready to do for them anything the friends need, even at much cost or great sacrifice, but they fail utterly in the amenities and graces which together are the charm and sweetener of all beautiful helpfulness. Love in the heart should always inspire whatsoever things are lovely in behavior, in conduct, in disposition; and nothing that gives pain to others, either in act, word, tone, or manner, can be lovely.

Self-love is the secret of many of the most unlovely things in disposition, in character, in conduct. A writer says: "All extreme sensitiveness, fastidiousness, suspicion, readiness to take offence, and tenacity of what we think our due, come from self-love, as does the unworthy secret gratification we sometimes feel when another is humbled or mortified; the cold indifference, the harshness of our criticism, the unfairness and hastiness of our judgments, our

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bitterness toward those we dislike, and many other faults which must more or less rise up before most men's conscience, when they question it sincerely as to how far they do indeed love their neighbors as Christ has loved them."

We are told that love "doth not behave itself unseemly." There are many things which cannot be said to be sinful, which are yet unseemly. They are not beautiful. They are unrefined. All displays of uncontrolled temper are unbecoming, unfit. All harsh and unkind words are unmeet. Rudeness in every form is out of harmony with the spirit of love.

The matter of manners should never be regarded as unimportant. Expression is a true index of character. In reading and speaking, a great deal depends upon pronunciation, accent, emphasis, tone, and the fine shadings of the voice which help in interpreting thought, feeling, emotion. To a refined and cultivated ear, defects in expression, inelegances in utterance, are painful. The charm of good elo-

Things that are Lovely

quence lies in its simplicity, its naturalness, its niceties of expression, and in its true interpretation of thought. Beautiful living, in like manner, is not only refined and cultivated, but also interprets truly what is best and most beautiful in the heart.

Anything unseemly is a worse marring in a woman than in a man. Men are of a coarser grain than women, of more common material. Unseemly things do not appear so unseemly in a man as in a woman. It is expected that every woman shall be beautiful, not only in her character, but also in her behavior, not only in what she does, but in the way she does it. There are books which claim to tell people how to behave, but true refinement cannot be learned from even the best of these. There is many a woman who is thoroughly familiar with the rules and requirements of society, whose life is full of unseemly things.

A young woman writes that on three successive Sundays she heard three different preachers, and that each of them spoke very earnestly on the importance of self-control. This

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persistent recurrence of the same lesson had set her to thinking of the subject, and she wrote with some alarm regarding her own lack of self-mastery. She saw that she had been allowing herself to fall into certain habits which are very unseemly, which are marring the sweetness of her disposition and making her disagreeable. She is living in a boarding-house, and she began to see that she had been behaving herself in a very selfish way toward her hostess. She had permitted herself to become exacting and critical, finding fault with everything. She had been acting like a peevish, fretful child, losing her temper and giving way to her feelings in a most unseemly fashion.

This young woman's frank confession of the faults into which she sees that she has drifted shows how unconscious we may be of unseemly things in our life and conduct. Other people see them, however, though we do not. It does not take long for one to get a reputation as a discontented person, as unreasonable, as hard to get along with, as disagreeable, or

Things that are Lovely

as a gossip, or a meddler in other people's matters. We need to keep it in our prayers continually, that we may have the gift to see ourselves as others see us. It would be a good thing if we all were to read the thirteenth of First Corinthians at least once a week all through our life. It would be like looking into a mirror which would expose the unseemly things in our behavior, that we might cure them.

The cure for unseemliness is not found in books of etiquette, nor in any mere external culture, but in love in the heart. Rudeness of all kinds soon yields to refinement of spirit. Love makes the roughest man gentle. It inspires in us all beautiful things—gentleness, kindness, good temper, thoughtfulness, obligingness, every form of unselfishness, the spirit of serving, and the truest courtesy. Jesus was the truest gentleman that ever lived, and all who really follow him will catch his spirit and learn the beauty of his refinement.

•

To Suffer and Love On

*Here, and here alone,
Is given thee to suffer for God's sake.
In the other worlds we shall more perfectly
Serve him and love him, praise him, work for him,
Grow near and nearer him with all delight,
But then we shall not any more be called
To suffer, which is our appointment here.
Canst thou not suffer, then, one hour or two?
If he should call thee from thy cross to-day,
Saying, It is finished!—that hard cross of thine
From which thou prayest for deliverance,
Thinkest thou not some passion of regret
Would overcome thee? Thou wouldst say, "So soon?
Let me go back and suffer yet awhile
More patiently:—I have not yet praised God."*

—H. E. H. KING.

CHAPTER THIRD

To Suffer and Love On



CHRISTIAN is not called to an easy, comfortable, self-indulgent life, but to self-denial, sacrifice, cross-bearing. When two of his disciples asked for the first places in his kingdom, the Master said to them: "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink the cup I am about to drink?" Speaking of suffering wrongfully, Saint Peter says, "Hereunto were ye called"—that is, ye were called to suffer wrongfully. He is writing to servants or slaves. Ofttimes they would find their position very hard. Their masters would be severe, sometimes cruel. They are exhorted, however, to submit quietly, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. "If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called."

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None of us are slaves, but many of us have to work under others, and the others are not always "good and gentle." The problem in many lives is how to maintain the Christian spirit, how to be Christlike in one's place under others who are unreasonable, exacting, unjust, or unkind. The New Testament teaching is that we are to do our work well, to manifest the patient, gentle spirit of Christ, whatever our hardships and wrongs may be. Back of the human masters stands another Master, and it is for him we are really working. He is the one we are to seek to please in all that we do. This changes the character of all service. Our Master would not be pleased if we did our work negligently, if we skimmed it, or if we showed bitterness even under hard and unjust treatment.

The example of Christ in suffering is the copy set for us. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps." What does this example teach us? For one thing, Christ endured his suffering quietly and patiently. "Who, when he was

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reviled, reviled not again." Most of our Lord's sufferings were at the hands of men. He was a friend of men, and sought always to do them good. But this kindness met only unkindness in return. Those he sought to save rejected him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." We all know the story of Christ's wonderful love. He never ceased doing good, and men never ceased persecuting him. At last they nailed him on a cross, but really they were crucifying him, driving nails into his hands and feet and heart, all the three years of his public ministry. Yet his love was never chilled by the enmity and cruelty of men. He never had a bitter thought in his heart. Even on the cross, when human hate had done its worst, he loved on as tenderly, as patiently, as sweetly, as if he had been receiving only love from the world all the years.

This is part of the lesson set for us, and it is a lesson not easy to learn. It is hard to receive injury from others and always to return kindness for it. Especially is it hard to suffer

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wrongfully and keep one's heart sweet and loving through it all. Yet that is the lesson, and we find right here one of life's most serious problems. We cannot avoid suffering at the hands of others. In the truest and most congenial friendships there sometimes are things which occasion pain. Even in the sweetest home there is frequent need of mutual forbearance and forgiveness. Then there are many who have to suffer continually, oftentimes cruelly and bitterly, at the hands of others.

Here then is the problem—to keep love in the heart through all unkindness, ingratitude, and injustice; never to allow bitterness to creep in; never to give way to any feeling of resentment; always to be forgiving, loving, ready to help. It was thus that Christ went through his life to the very end, praying for his enemies even on his cross, and giving his life to save those who were driving him out of his own world.

We should remember that no one can really hurt our life but ourselves. Men may rob us of our money. They may injure us in many

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ways. They may cut our bodies to pieces. But they cannot touch our real life. All the wrongs they can inflict upon us will do us no actual injury. But if we give way to anger, if we let bitterness creep into our hearts, if we grow unforgiving or resentful, we have hurt ourselves. If on the other hand, we keep love in our hearts under all the human wrong we suffer we have won the victory over every wrong.

Another of Christ's steps in his suffering is shown in the words, "when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." He could have avenged himself on his enemies. He could have smitten them down, when they wronged him so sorely. "Thinkest thou," he said to his disciples, who wished to interfere to save him from his enemies, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" But he did not do it. He did nothing to check the wicked plots of his enemies. He lifted no finger to resist their malignant assaults.

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“But these were terrible wrongs against him,” you say. “Why did he submit to them so quietly? Is there no justice in the world? Must wicked men be allowed to go on forever in their wickedness and cruelty?” Here is the explanation: “He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”; that is, into the hands of his Father. This means two things. It means that he committed the sins of his enemies, with their deservings of wrath and their power to harm, to God, who is just and judgeth righteously. He himself would not take any revenge—he left the matter to his Father. Saint Paul teaches us to do the same with those who wrong us or sin against us: “Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord.” We are not the judge of any man. It is not our place to punish a man’s sins against us. Commit that to God—he is just.

The other thing meant is that Jesus committed himself, his own life, to God, with all his hurts and injuries, and all the grievous wrongs

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which had been done to him. His Father was able to take all these cruelties and all his Son's untold sufferings, and not only prevent their harming him, but use them even for the glorifying of his name. He was able to bring his Son through all the terrible experiences, and out from them, unharmed, with no trace of hurt upon him—and he did. Christ's enemies thought to quench utterly the light of his name in the black shame of the cross. But we know that no ray of brightness was put out—his name never shone so radiantly as it did after he had come again from death.

It is thus that we should do with our wrongs, when others seek to injure us, when they treat us unkindly or unjustly—we should commit ourselves and our ill-treatment to our Father. He will look after the equities. It is not our duty to avenge ourselves. Then we may also commit our lives to the same divine love, no matter how cruel, how vindictive, how relentless our enemies may be, nor how terrible the hurts they have done to us. He will preserve us from all the hurts of men's malignity. He

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will bring us safely through all danger and all assaults of evil. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be zealous of that which is good?"

But some one who has been suffering injury at the hands of others may say: "This terrible wrong against me has broken up my life, blighted my beautiful hopes, ruined all my promise of happiness." Yes; but God can build beauty yet for you out of these broken things. Keep your heart sweet with love, and your soul unstained by sin, and then trust your life to your Father. He will bring blessing and good out of all that seems such a pitiful ruin to-day. Could there ever again be such a wreck of all that was beautiful in a life as there was that Good Friday evening, when a few friends took down the body of Jesus from the cross and laid it away in the grave? But we know what came out of that ruin. It will be the same with every one who, in time of human betrayal or wrong, commits all with confidence to God.

The same lesson applies to all suffering, as

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well as to the enduring of wrong from others. Some people suppose that sorrow always does good, blesses the life, enriches the character. But, in fact, it oftentimes hurts a life irreparably. If we do not submit ourselves to God in our grief, if we resist and rebel, if we chafe and repine, and go on grieving inconsolably, our sorrow hurts our lives. It mars the beauty. It hushes the song. It dims the eye. It robs the heart of its love. If, however, we reverently accept our sorrow as a messenger from God, sent on a mission of love, bearing gifts and blessings from heaven for us, then we shall get good and not evil from our pain and loss. We have only to keep our hearts sweet, trustful, songful, without bitterness, without fear, and then leave with God all the outcome of the suffering.

There is a story of an Indian child who one day came in from the wheat-field with a hurt bird in her hand. Running to the old chief, she said: "See! This is my bird. I found it in the wheat. It is hurt." The old man looked at the wounded bird and replied slowly:

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“No, it is not your bird, my child—it is God’s bird. Take it back and lay it down where you found it. If you keep it, it will die. If you give it back into God’s hands, he will heal its hurt and it will live.”

What the old Indian said of hurt birds is true of hearts hurt by sorrow. No human hand can heal them—the only safe thing to do in time of grief is to put our lives into God’s hands, to commit them to him. His hands are gentle and skilful. They will not break a bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

We need never be afraid of suffering. “Hereunto were ye called.” There must be a reason for this in God’s thought of us. We know, at least, that we never can reach the best things in life but by the paths of pain. All the richest blessings of grace lie beyond lines of suffering which we must pass to get them. Even of Jesus it is said, that he was made perfect through suffering. There were attainments which even he could reach in no other way. All that is worthiest and most Christlike in good men bears the marks of pain

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upon it. We must pay the price if we would get the blessing.

Then we must suffer oftentimes also for the sake of others. Christ suffered for all men in a way in which no other one ever can suffer. The influence of his unspeakable sorrow is renewing and refining the whole race. Sorrow in any life softens other hearts. If there is crape on a door on any street the whole neighborhood feels its softening, quieting influence. Every one who passes the house comes under the mystic spell. Even the children at their play are impressed. We are all woven together into one mystic web of humanity, so that no man can live to himself. We must be willing to suffer that others may receive blessing from our pain. We never can become largely useful without suffering. We cannot get the power of sympathy which alone will fit us for being helpful to others in the best ways, save in the school of pain. We never can do anything worth while for humanity without first learning in suffering the lessons we will teach in song and hope.

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*“ We love them, and they know it ; if we falter
With fingers numb,
Among the unused strings of love’s expression,
The notes are dumb ;
We shrink within ourselves in voiceless sorrow,
Leaving the words unsaid,
And, side by side with those we love the dearest,
In silence on we tread.*

*“ Thus on we tread, and thus each heart in silence
Its fate fulfils,
Waiting and hoping for the heavenly music
Beyond the distant hills.
The only difference of the love in heaven
From love on earth below,
Is—here we love and know not how to tell it,
And there we all shall know.”*

CHAPTER FOURTH

The Hurt of Flattery



AN English writer has some good words about flattery. They are suggested by a character in a recent story. It is that of an old woman who was clever but very disagreeable. One of her friends said to her that she ought to be more gracious and to give amiability a trial in her life. She was conscience stricken and confused as she thought of herself. "I'm a beast of an old woman," she said. "I can be agreeable if I choose; nobody more so." "Then why not choose to be so?" it was suggested. So she tried the experiment and was greatly encouraged. Her amiability gave pleasure to her friends and she kept it up.

But she was not always wise in her new rôle of amiability. For instance, she fell into the

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habit of flattery, thinking that in this way she could please people. On every occasion she practised this new art with assiduity. The result was not always felicitous, however. Too often she would so overdo her praise of people that its insincerity became apparent. Even the vainest persons were made aware, by the extravagance of her words, that she was only playing with them, and the effect was not to please but to offend. She would break out in enthusiasm over a friend's bonnet or dress. She would go into paroxysms of mirth over the retelling by another friend of some old story or of some threadbare bit of humor. She would tell some old, withered woman how fresh and young she looked—like a young girl in her teens. So the good woman's excessive efforts at amiability had the effect of sarcasm upon those she supposed she was pleasing.

There are many people who fall into the same mistake. It is a quite common opinion that almost every one is susceptible to the influence of flattery. There are different ways

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of flattering. There are some who are so extravagant in their expressions that none but the very vain and silly take their words seriously and are pleased by what they say. They flatter every one, on every occasion. They go into ecstasy over everything you do or say. They lose no opportunity in your presence of saying complimentary things about you. But there is no discrimination in their effusive talk, which is as fluent over most trivial things as over the most important. Besides, it lacks the note of sincerity. They only proclaim the shallowness of their own hearts and their want of sense in supposing that they can deceive people into believing that they mean what they say.

There are others who flatter and yet do it in a much wiser, more delicate, and less effusive and objectionable way. They watch for opportunities to pay compliments and they do say things which will please those to whom they are speaking. They exaggerate the good qualities which they commend or the worthy acts which they praise. They repeat the

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kind things they have heard said about their friends.

Their motive in all this is to get the good opinion of those they laud. But, really, in just so far as it is insincere, such complimenting is unwise in friendship. Even those who are in a way pleased by such praise for the moment are in the end offended by it. There is an instinct in every man who is not hopelessly self-conceited which tells him when the words of commendation he hears are sincerely spoken and when they are only empty words. In every phase and form, flattery is despicable. On the whole, too, it fails to deceive, and, therefore, fails to please. It is resented by every worthy person and weakens rather than strengthens friendship.

The moment one who claims to be our friend utters anything which we know to be an exaggeration of his interest in us, his regard for us, or his opinion of us or of something we have done, he has hurt himself with us. Friendship needs no flattery in its professions or in its intercourse. It must be thor-

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oughly sincere in all its expressions. Insincerity in any form or in any smallest measure is a kind of disloyalty against which every true heart instinctively revolts.

Yet there are people who have become so used to adulation that they cannot be happy without it. They expect everyone to say complimentary things to them and of them. They have lived so long and so entirely in an atmosphere of approbation that any speech which lacks this quality seems tame and cold to them.

This is a danger to which women are more exposed than men. Everybody tries to say complimentary things to women. Men are more likely to hear the bare truth about themselves even though oftentimes it be disagreeable. In school, and on the playground, boys are in the habit of speaking out bluntly and frankly to each other, not asking or thinking whether the words will give pleasure or pain. It is very rarely that a boy hears flattery, unless it be from his gentle mother, who sees everything in him from love's point of view. In

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college and university life young men are not encouraged to think more highly of themselves than the facts of their character and conduct warrant them to think. Their faults are oft-times mercilessly exposed. Men get some of their best lessons, too, from the brusqueness of their fellows. At the time they do not like it—may even think it almost brutal—but it helps to make men of them. When college students win compliments and praise from their fellows, it must be for something worthy, almost heroic. They are not in great danger of being spoiled by flattery.

But with women it is altogether different. Even as little girls they are petted and praised by everyone. They grow up in a hot-house atmosphere of appreciation. Too often they are trained to expect complimenting on all occasions, wherever they go, whatever they do. They are dressed by their mothers with a view to admiration, and it is regarded as the proper thing for everybody who sees them to go into a measure of rapture over their handsome appearance. Their early attainments and

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achievements are always praised, sometimes in exaggerated fashion. As they grow older it is the same. In girls' colleges the freshmen are "hazed" with flowers and suppers. Men of all ages vie with each other in showing gallantry to women. Any exhibition of rudeness to them is regarded as unpardonable. They are always listening to compliments which sometimes verge on flattery.

The wonder is that so many women, brought up in such an atmosphere, escape hurt in their life and character, and maintain the sweetness, the simplicity, the humility, the thoughtfulness, and the gentleness, which are among the highest qualities in ideal womanliness. That more are not spoiled by the continual adulation which they receive and are taught to expect is another proof of the innate nobleness of woman's nature. It must be admitted that the influence of such a training upon the character and disposition is not strengthening, does not tend to develop the best things in the life. We all need opposition and antagonism to make us strong and to bring out the graces

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and virtues in us. The girls who do not live always in an atmosphere of flattery, but who are subject to more or less criticism find their compensation in the greater self-reliance which they acquire.

There is a genuine appreciation of others and of what they say and do which is not only proper, but is a bounden duty. It is right to express our admiration for what pleases us in others. In this case, the motive is not to receive compliments in return, nor to gain favor and influence, but to give cheer and encouragement. Saint Paul tells us that we should please our neighbor for his good to edification. A child is striving earnestly to master some art or science, but he is disheartened, for he is not succeeding. Nothing will do him so much good as a word of appreciation and confidence, a word of encouragement, which will spur him to do his best. If he hears only fault-finding and criticism, he may lose heart altogether and give up. But when he learns that some one believes in him and expects him to succeed, he receives new inspiration which

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makes him stronger to go on with his striving. There is a great lack of just this proper and wholesome spirit of appreciation and genuine encouragement. Many times life is made a great deal harder for people by the want of kind words. Thousands live faithfully and work hard at their commonplace tasks, day after day, year after year, and yet never hear a single sentence which tells them of any human interest in them or in their work.

This is so in many homes where it might be supposed that the law of love is most faithfully observed. Scarcely ever is a heartening word spoken by one to another. If all in the household would form the habit of giving an expression to the loving appreciation which is in their hearts, it would soon transform the home life.

*“ 'Tis a little thing to say, ' You are kind ;
I love you, my dear,' each night ;
But it sends a thrill through the heart, I find—
For love is tender, as love is blind—
As we climb life's rugged height.*

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*“ We starve each other for love’s caress ;
We take, but we do not give ;
It seems so easy some soul to bless,
But we dole the love grudgingly, less and less,
Till ’tis bitter and hard to live.”*

The same lack prevails, too, everywhere. Many men sink under their burdens or faint in their battles, because no one ever thinks to express the kindly interest and appreciation which are in his heart. One of the best services anyone can render to his fellows is always to be an encourager. How rarely do we say the hearty word of cheer which would warm the blood and make it tingle!

We should miss no opportunity to say kindly and encouraging things to all about us. Life is hard enough for many people at the best, and we should be glad to make it easier when we may, and we can make it easier for all about us by showing genuine appreciation. What really helps people and makes them braver and stronger is not flattery, but kindness, which is bread of life to hungry hearts.

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- “ *Why do we wait till ears are deaf
Before we speak our kindly word,
And only utter loving praise
When not a whisper can be heard ?*
- “ *Why do we wait till hands are laid
Close-folded, pulseless, ere we place
Within them roses sweet and rare,
And lilies in their flawless grace ?*
- “ *Why do we wait till eyes are sealed
To light and love in death's deep trance—
Dear wistful eyes—before we bend
Above them with impassioned glance ?*
- “ *Why do we wait till hearts are still
To tell them all the love in ours,
And give them such late mead of praise,
And lay above them fragrant flowers ?*”

“Nor Life”

*“Being perplexed, I say,
Lord, make it right !
Night is as day to thee,
Darkness as light.
I am afraid to touch things
That involve so much,
My trembling hand may shake,
My skilful hand may break ;
Thine can make no mistake.”*

CHAPTER FIFTH

“Nor Life”



ONE of the finest passages in Saint Paul's letters is his triumphant expression of confidence that nothing can separate the Christian from the love of God. One of the items the writer names is life—"neither death nor life." We are not surprised that he should mention death, for death carries us out from "our bourne of time and place," into a mystery which no eye can penetrate. We are grateful therefore for the assurance that death will not separate us from the love of God.

*"'Tis but to pierce the mist—and then
How beautiful to be with God!"*

There is a deep significance, however, in the fact that life itself is named among the perils to which we are exposed, and in the assurance

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that it cannot separate us from God's love. Living is fraught with far more danger than dying. Think what life is. It is not merely getting through this world in the best way we can. We are not here to make a living, but to make a life, to grow, to do God's will, to leave at least one spot of the world a little brighter and better. Think of the way we begin life—as babies, with great possibilities, but all to be developed. Think how much depends upon our strength, and yet how weak we are; upon our wisdom, and how ignorant we are. Think of the evil there is in the world, and how easy it is for us to drift away on its dark tides. Think of the temptations we must meet continually, and how unequal we are to the terrific struggle with them. Think of the work we have to do, the burdens we must carry, the responsibilities that are ours. Think of the mistakes we may make and of what disastrous consequences may result from them.

It is not easy to live. Every step of the passage from birth to death is through perils

“Nor Life”

and antagonisms. Yet we have the assurance that even life, with all it holds of danger and conflict, cannot separate us from the love of God; that in all these things we may be more than conquerors through him that loved us. Serious then as life is, we need not dread to live. No enemy can really harm us. No load can crush us. No power can wrench us away from the keeping of God.

Indeed, the divine love changes all the hard things into blessings. There is a way of living in this world by which the evil is transmuted into good. Before the Master went away he prayed for the keeping of his disciples in the perils they must meet, committing them to the Father's care. He did not ask that they should be taken from the world. It might have seemed greater kindness to them if he had done this. But they had a work to do in the world and there was also a work to be done in them. When we find life almost harder than we can bear, with struggle, opposition, human enmity, or sore trial, it will help us to remember that our Master wants us and needs

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us just where we are, or he would not leave us there.

But while Jesus did not ask that his disciples should be taken from the world, he did ask that they might be kept from its evil. The true prayer in time of great trial, care or sorrow, is, not that we shall be delivered from the experiences, but that we may pass through them unharmed. It is right for us to pray to be kept from evil, but there is only one evil. It is not sickness, it is not poverty, it is not human wrong and cruelty, it is not earthly loss—the only evil is sin. Nothing else can harm us. One rebellious thought will hurt us more than all the martyrs' fires we could suffer, or the longest and most dreadful agonies of pain we could endure.

There is another word of Saint Paul's which comes in here: "We know that to them that love God all things work together for good." Instead of being something to dread, therefore, because of its dangers and antagonisms, its burdens and sorrows, life is a school of good. Temptations are meant by the Evil One to de-

“*For Life*”

stroy us, but when we resist and overcome them, they become helpers of our growth and progress, leaving us stronger and wiser. Sorrows which seem only to wound and scar, purify and enrich our characters. The best lives are those that have suffered the most and struggled the most. The men and women who reach the finest things in character and the largest usefulness are not those who have had only ease and a comfortable time, but those who have learned in struggle how to be strong and in suffering how to be sympathetic and gentle.

In the hardest experiences of life we are sure always of God's love. An Arctic explorer was asked whether during the long months of slow starvation which he and his companions had endured, they suffered greatly from the pangs of hunger. He replied that these pangs were forgotten in the feeling that their friends at home had forgotten them and were not coming to rescue them. There is no suffering so bitter as the sense of abandonment, the thought that nobody cares. But however painful and

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hard our condition may be, however men may wrong us and injure us, Christian faith assures us that God loves us, that he has not forgotten us, that he cares.

Life is not a series of merely fortuitous happenings, unplanned, unpurposed. "Every man's life is a plan of God." A divine purpose runs through all the events and circumstances of our days. This purpose is not that we should do a certain amount of work in the world, but that we ourselves should be built up into strength and beauty of character. Work is not a curse, as is sometimes thoughtlessly said—it is a means of grace. The reason we have to work is not primarily because the world needs the work but because we need it. Men are not in business just to build so many houses a year, to sell so many bales of goods, to cultivate so many acres of land, to do the routine work of their calling successfully—they are set to these duties in order that in them they may grow into men—strong, true, gentle, worthy men. Women are not appointed to certain tasks in household work, in social

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life, in teaching or business, merely to become good housekeepers, good business women, or good teachers, nurses, or physicians—the divine purpose in all their toil is that they may grow into noble womanhood.

Sometimes men fail in their business ventures or in their professions. They give their best strength and their most strenuous efforts to some work, and it does not succeed. The work fails, but the men need not fail. It is a great thing to meet misfortune victoriously, coming out of it with life unhurt, with new strength and courage for another effort. A distinguished jurist lost an important case in the courts. He showed no feeling of discouragement, however, and a friend asked him how he could take his disappointment so calmly. “When it is over,” said the great lawyer, “I have no more to do with it. If I kept thinking of my defeats, I feel that I should go mad. But I will not brood over them. When one case is done, I drop it, whatever the result may be, and go on to the next.”

It is a fine thing to see a boy, when his com-

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petitor has won the game, reach out his hand to him in manly congratulation. He has lost the game, but he has won in nobility. The only real defeat is when a man shows an unmanly spirit and yields to depression after losing in business, or pouts and sulks and acts like a baby when he has failed to get the prize he wanted.

It is one of the wonders of divine love that even our blemishes and sins God will take, when we truly repent of them and give them into his hands, and make them blessings to us in some way. A friend once showed Ruskin a costly handkerchief on which a blot of ink had been made. "Nothing can be done with that," the friend said, thinking the handkerchief worthless and ruined now. Ruskin carried it away with him and after a time sent it back to his friend. In a most skilful and artistic way he had made a fine design in India ink, using the blot as its basis. Instead of being ruined, the handkerchief was made far more beautiful and valuable.

So God takes the blots and flecks and stains

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upon our lives, the disfiguring blemishes, when we commit them to him, and by his marvellous grace changes them into marks of beauty. David's grievous sin was not only forgiven, but was made a transforming power in his life. Peter's pitiful fall became a step upward through his Lord's forgiveness and gentle dealing. Peter never would have become the man he afterward became if he had not denied his Lord, and then repented and been restored. There ought to be great comfort for us in the truth, that in all our life God is making us. It is not easy to make a man or a woman into the beauty God wants to see. Some of us are harder to make, too, than others. Sometimes the cost is terrific. It took a great deal of severe discipline and schooling to make an apostle of Peter, but the price paid was not too much when the result was such a magnificent man.

Sometimes we think God deals severely with us. We have many defeats and disappointments. We have sorrows and losses. We stumble and fall again and again. Why is it? we

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ask. Here is the answer: God is making us. He wants us to grow into strength and beauty. He wants us to do service among men which shall be a blessing to them. He wants to have us get to heaven at last. It costs a great deal, but is any price of pain, anguish, or loss too great to pay for such an outcome? William Canton writes of the cost of making one man:

*A man lived fifty years—joy dashed with tears ;
Loved, toiled ; had wife and child, and lost
them ; died ;
And left of all his long life's work one little song.
That lasted—naught beside.*

*Like the Monk Felix's bird, that song was heard ;
Doubt prayed, faith soared, death smiled itself
to sleep ;
That song saved souls. You say the man paid
stiffly ? Nay,
God paid—and thought it cheap.*

There is one thing always to be remembered. Saint Paul tells us that we become more than conquerors in all life's trials, dangers, struggles, temptations, and sorrows, only "through him that loved us." Without Christ we can

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but be defeated. There is only one secret that can turn evil into good, pain into blessing—that is the love of Christ. There is only one Hand that can take the blotted life and transform it into beauty. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

But there is a way we can miss all this blessing. God’s love changes not; nothing can separate us from it. Yet unbelief can rob us of all the blessing of that love. We can shut it out of our hearts if we will. Then everything in life will harm instead of help us. The one secret of being in the world and not of the world, of passing through life and not being hurt by life’s evil, of having all things work together for good to us—the one and only secret—is to have the love of God in our hearts. No one can be lost whose heart keeps in it always this blessed love.

Having the Mind of Christ

*“ Have ye stood by the sad and weary,
To smooth the pillow of death,
To comfort the sorrow-stricken,
And strengthen the feeble faith ?
And have ye felt, when the glory
Has streamed through the open door
And flitted across the shadows,
That there I had been before ?*

*“ Have ye wept with the broken-hearted
In their agony of woe ?
Ye might hear me whispering beside you,
‘ ’Tis the pathway I often go !’
My brethren, my friends, my disciples,
Can you dare to follow me ?
Then, wherever the Master dwelleth
There shall the servant be.”*

CHAPTER SIXTH

Having the Mind of Christ



THE ideal Christian life is one in which the mind that was in Christ Jesus rules. But what is the mind that was in Christ? Is there any word that describes it?

What was the very heart of Christ's mission? What one day was there in all his life when he showed forth most clearly the central glory of his character? Was there any one act in all the multitude of his wonderful works in which the radiant blessedness of his life was revealed in greater fulness than in any other?

If you were asked to name the one day in the life of our Lord when he showed most of the splendor of his person, which day of all would you choose? Would it be the time of his transfiguration, when the brightness of his deity shone out through the robes of flesh that he wore? Would it be the day of his miracle of

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feeding the five thousand, or the day when he raised Lazarus? Or would you take some scene when he stood amid throngs of lame, sick, blind, and healed them all? Or would you say that the brightest moment of his earthly life was when he was riding into the city with great processions of joyous people crying, "Hosanna"?

None of these hours of human splendor was the hour of the fullest revealing of the heart of Christ. None of those radiant days was the day when most of his true glory was manifested. None of these achievements of power was the greatest thing Jesus ever did. The brightest day in all his earthly career was the day when he hung upon his cross. The revealing of his glory that was divinest was when men thought that he had sunk away in the deepest shame. The act that was the sublimest of all his achievements was the giving of himself in death for men. We could spare all the miracles out of the gospel story and all the narrative of gentle and beautiful things, if the cross were left. The cross is the fullest repre-

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sentation of the glory of Christ. If we ask, then, where, on what day, in what one act, the completest revealing of Christ can be seen, the answer is—on Good Friday, when he died between two thieves.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” The very hall-mark of Christ-likeness is the stamp of the cross. We say we want to be like Christ. We say it in our prayers, we sing it in our hymns, we put it into our consecration services. But what do we mean by being like Christ? Are we not in danger of getting into our vision of it merely some surface gleams of divinity, an easy kind of life, a gentle piety, a dainty charity, a fashionable holiness, a pleasing service? When two disciples asked for the highest places, the Master spoke to them in serious words of his baptism and his cup, asking them if they were able to drink of the cup and be baptized with the baptism. When we say we want to be like Christ, he points us to his cross and says: “That is what it is to be like me; are you able?”

The cross shows us a vision of what our life

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must be if we are following Christ. The cross stamps itself on every true Christian life. Some people wear crosses as ornaments. If we are Christians like Jesus, we will wear the cross in our heart.

Suppose we vary the question, and ask what act in our own life we look back upon with the greatest satisfaction, what day we think of as the brightest and divinest of all our days. What achievement of yours do you consider the highest in all your life? Do you think of a day when you made some signal triumph in school, or won some unusual success in business, or carried off the honors in some contest, or did some fine piece of work which men praised? We are apt to think the red-letter days in our life are the days when we gathered honor for ourselves.

But in the light of the lesson we are now learning, are these the best days in our lives? Some one has said, "The greatest thing a man can do for his heavenly Father is to be kind to some of the Father's other children." The things that are really the brightest in your

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past life are not the honors you won for yourself, the brilliant successes you achieved, nor the prosperities which added to your importance among men, but the deeds of love which your hand wrought in Christ's name for some of his little ones. The one brightest day in all your past life was the day you did your purest, most unselfish, most self-denying act for your Master, in serving one of his. It is only when we have some measure of Christ's self-renunciation that we have touched the truest and Christliest things in life.

There is a story of a potter in China who received from the emperor a command to make a rare set of porcelain ware for the royal table. With greatest pains he began his work, desiring to make it the finest achievement of his life. Again and again, however, when the pieces were put into the furnace, they were marred. At length another set was ready for burning, and the potter hoped that this one would be successful. But as he watched it in the furnace he saw that this, too, would be a failure. In despair he threw himself into the

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fire and his body was consumed. But when the pieces were taken out they were found to be so wondrously beautiful that nothing like them had ever before been seen. Not until the potter sacrificed his own life in the doing of it was his work successful.

The old heathen legend has its lesson for Christian life. Our work never reaches the highest beauty, is never fit for our King, until love's self-sacrifice is wrought into it. Things we do for ourselves, to win honor for our own name, to make profit for our own enrichment, are never the things that are most beautiful in God's sight. The greatest things we do are those that are wrought in utter self-forgetfulness for Christ's glory.

There will be strange reversals in the day of final revealing, when all things shall appear as they are. Many of earth's trumpeted deeds will shrivel into nothingness. Many of earth's proud names, bedecked with brilliant honors and garlanded with human praises, will fade away into insignificance, because there is no love in the things which won them their distinc-

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tion. And up out of the shadows of obscurity where they were overlooked by men, and left unhonored and unrecorded, thousands of lowly deeds will rise into immortal beauty and honor, because love inspired them. Up, too, out of the throngs of earth's unnamed will rise a multitude of lowly ones to receive reward, to shine like the stars, because they lived out the lesson of the cross.

There are some who complain bitterly because to all their loving they get such small requital. Sometimes it is not only unrequital—the love is hurt, smitten in the face, wounded, scorned. In many a home there is one who loves and lives for the others and yet is unloved. In all departments of life there are those who must think and plan and labor and endure, while the honor of all they do gathers about some other brow.

It ought to be a sweet comfort to all such to know that precisely this is the highest, the divinest duty of love. These are the lives that are likest Christ's. He loved and was rejected and shut out of people's homes and hearts, per-

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secuted, wronged, at last nailed upon a cross. Yet he loved on; the fountain in his heart flowed as full as ever. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

It would be well if we could get into our hearts a vision of the central meaning of the cross. It was not merely a man giving himself for the helping of his fellow-men—it was the Son of God giving himself, pouring out his own blood to redeem lost men. One of the most wonderful of the ancient litanies contains among others these petitions: "By the cold crib in which thou didst lie, have mercy upon us. By thy flight into Egypt and all the pains thou didst suffer there; by the thirst, hunger, cold, and heat in this vale of thy misery; by the inward and great heaviness which thou hadst when praying in the garden; by the spitting on thee and the scourging; by thy purple garments and thy crown of thorns; by the nailing of thy right hand to the cross and the shedding of thy most precious blood; by the nailing of thy left hand and that most holy wound—purge, enlighten, and reconcile us to

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God. By the lifting up of thy most holy body on the cross; by the bitterness of thy death and its intolerable pains; by thy glorious resurrection; by thy wonderful and glorious ascension, have mercy upon us. For the glory, and the divine majesty and virtue of thy holy name, save us, and govern us now and ever."

If such a vision of the loving, suffering, redeeming Christ as these flaming sentences bring before us but filled our hearts, we would then know something of what the cross means. Its image would burn itself upon our very souls. It is into fellowship with all this in Christ that we are called in the words, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He gave his life to save the world; he calls us to give our lives to save the world. It is not enough to tell in flaming words of the love of Christ to men; we must be in flaming lives the love of Christ to men. It is not enough to sit in our places of worship and sing praises to God for our own salvation; we must hasten out to seek and to save the lost.

The Second Mile

*Up, my drowsing eyes !
Up, my sinking heart !
Up, to Jesus Christ arise !
Claim your part
In all raptures of the skies !*

*Yet a little while,
Yet a little way,
Saints shall reap and rest and smile
All the day :
Up ! let's trudge another mile !*

—CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

The Second Mile



ONE of our Lord's remarkable exhortations is, "Who-soever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two." That is, do more than you are expected to do, be better than you are expected to be, go farther in love and service and self-denial than you are required to go. The immediate reference is to the old hard days when most men had to serve despotic masters and often do compulsory service. For example, men would be required to go with invading soldiers to guide them through the country and carry their burdens. "If such forced service is demanded of you," said Jesus, "do not resist; go cheerfully; go even farther than you are compelled to go."

Of course, this is only an illustration of a principle. The Christian is to accept hardness

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patiently. He is not to watch the clock lest he may work a few minutes over time. He is not to keep account of all the things he does for others, lest he may do more than he is required to do. Rather, when he is serving, he is to do more than strict duty demands. He is to go two miles instead of one.

The religion of his day was not satisfactory to our Master. So he said to his disciples, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." We are Christ's true followers, not when we do no murder—that is going one mile—but when we keep our hearts free from all bitterness, all unkind feelings, all desire for revenge—that is going the second mile. The religion of the Pharisees said they must love their friends but hate their enemies, giving as they had received—going only one short mile. But the friends of Jesus must go the second mile and love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. "What do ye more than others?" is the question which tests Christian life. Any-

The Second Mile

body can love those who love him and be kind to those who are kind to him. You must do more—you must go two miles.

The principle applies to everything in life. A good many people want to go only one mile in consecration, in praying, in loving others, in doing God's will. But mere one-mile following of Christ is pitifully inadequate. What kind of a friend do you like—one who will go just the easy one mile with you, while the path is flowery, and the air full of sweet odors, and then drop off when the road gets steep and rough, and the winter winds begin to blow? Or do you like the friend who stays by you when it costs to be your friend, when he has to carry burdens for you, has almost to carry you, sometimes? Do you like best the friend who goes only one short, easy mile with you and then drops off, or the friend who goes the second mile? Was Orpah or Ruth the better friend to Naomi?

What kind of friends do you suppose Jesus Christ likes to have—those who go with him a little way while it is easy, and then drop out

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when the pinch comes, or those who go with him through pain, tears, and cost? those who go one mile or those who go two? Some Christian people never have learned the deep joy of the Christian life because they never have gone beneath the surface in loving Christ and in consecration to him. Our religion is too easy-going. We think we are fulfilling our duty if we attend church once a Sunday when the weather is clear, if we give a few cents a week to God's cause, if we kneel morning and evening and say a little prayer. Yet these are only one-mile excursions in religion, and the blessing does not lie at the end of the little conventional mile—it lies farther on, at the end of the second mile.

Everything about Christian life is infinite. It has no marked boundary lines beyond which it may not reach, no *ne plus ultra*, beyond which its conquests may not extend. There is no limit to the measure of Christian joy and peace. We should never be satisfied with any attainments we have already reached. Whatever we have achieved to-day we should set our

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standard higher for to-morrow. An artist when asked which he considered his best picture, would answer: "My next."

*"No man can say at night—
His goal is reached ; the hunger for the light
Moves with the star ; our thirst will not depart
Howe'er we drink. 'Tis what before us goes
Keeps us aweary, will not let us lay
Our heads in dreamland, though the enchanted
palm
Rise from our desert, though the fountain grow
Up in our path, with slumber's flowing balm ;
The soul is o'er the horizon far away."*

We should always look well to that quality of Christian life which our Lord himself said is the unfailing hall-mark of discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." The measure of this love is given in the same paragraph—"even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." "As I have loved you"—that is the second mile in loving others. The first mile is loving pleasant, agreeable people, in a conventional way, so long as they love you, flatter

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you, and pamper your vanity. The second-mile Christian loves people he does not like—loves the unloveliest, and does good without measure, hoping for nothing again. One-mile loving asks, “How often must I forgive my fellow-Christian when he has been unkind to me? Seven times?” Second-mile loving never asks any such question. It is patient, forbearing, forgiving seventy times seven, even unto the uttermost. It keeps no account of how much or how often.

Think what patience Jesus had with his disciples, and then read, “As I have loved you.” Think how he bore with their faults and failings, with their dulness and slowness, with their unbelief and unfaithfulness, with their denials and betrayals. “As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” How it shames our touchiness, our quick firing up when a brother seems to fail a little in courtesy, or speaks a little quickly! Was that the way Jesus loved his friends? Is that the way he loves us now? If it were, we never could be saved, we never could learn the lesson of

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loving; and if we never learn to love as Jesus loves, we cannot enter heaven, for heaven is only for those who have learned to love. Shall we not set as our standard this love that goes the second mile?

We should go a second mile also in the submitting of our lives to the will and the Spirit of God. We say we take Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master. We do not begin to be Christians until we do. First, he is our Saviour. Then comes surrender. "Follow me" is his word. Martin Luther's seal was a rose; in the rose a heart; in the heart a cross. The rose suggested fragrance and beauty. A Christian's life should be winning. It should be sweet, pouring forth the perfume of love. The heart in the rose told that all true life is love-inspired. Then at the centre of all was the cross. That is the inspiration of it all. Until we have the cross of Christ in us, in our very heart, we can have neither fragrance nor beauty. We should never forget that only the self-sacrificing love of Christ in our hearts can transform our lives. And we can have Christ in us

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only by yielding our lives to him. To resist the Spirit of Christ is to cut ourselves off from blessing.

*“ Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem
be born,*

If he's not born in thee, thy soul is all forlorn.

God's Spirit falls on me as dewdrops on a rose,

If I but, like a rose, my heart to him disclose.

In all eternity no tone can be so sweet

*As when man's heart with God's in unison doth
beat.*

*Whate'er thou lovest, man, that too become thou
must—*

God, if thou lovest God ; dust, if thou lovest dust.”

Losing Self in Christ

*O the bitter shame and sorrow
That a time could ever be,
When I let the Saviour's pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered,
" All of self, and none of thee."*

*Yet he found me ; I beheld him
Bleeding on the accursed tree ;
Heard him pray, " Forgive them, Father !"
And my wistful heart said faintly,
" Some of self, and some of thee."*

*Day by day his tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Sweet and strong, and, ah ! so patient,
Brought me lower, while I whispered,
" Less of self, and more of thee."*

*Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, thy love at last hath conquered ;
Grant me now my soul's desire,
" None of self, and all of thee."*

—THEODORE MONOD.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

Losing Self in Christ



THE Christian's first duty is to honor his Master. He must be willing to sink himself out of sight in order that the name of Christ may be magnified. It is not always possible to honor Christ and yet to honor ourselves before men. Sometimes the wreath on our own brow must fade if we would keep the wreath for Christ beautiful and green. Sometimes we must decrease that Christ may increase. Sometimes we must be willing to fall into the shadow, that the full light may be cast upon his face. Sometimes we must be ready to suffer loss that the cause of Christ may be advanced. But all this seeming decrease if we are true at heart to our Master, is only seeming. The honor on our brow is never so bright as when we have will-

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ingly stripped off the stars from ourselves to bind them on the brow of Jesus.

It is easy to mar the beauty. We have all seen people chafing and envying when position and influence once theirs passed to others. There is no severer test of character than comes in such experiences as this. It is not easy when others achieve promotions that we had hoped to win, for us to keep our spirits gentle, generous, and sweet. It is not easy, even in school, to have another win the prize that we sought and hoped to take, and then not to feel envious of him, but to treat him with true affection, joining his fellows in sincere honoring of him. It is not easy in the home, for a plain, unattractive child to see a bright, popular, brilliant sister idolized and petted, receiving universal praise, while she, the plain, homely one, is neglected and left without attention—it is not easy for the plain girl to see this and yet keep loyal affection in her heart and join cheerfully and proudly in the honoring of the favorite. It is always hard to decrease while another increases, especially if it be at our own cost.

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Yet only as we learn to die to self, do we become like Christ. Unrenewed nature seeks all of self and none of Christ. Becoming a Christian is the taking of Christ into the life in the place of self. Then all is changed. Life has a new centre, a new aim. Christ comes first. His plan for our lives is accepted instead of our own. It is no more what we would like to do, but "What does the Master want us to do?" It is no longer the pressing of our own will, but "Thy will, not mine, be done." This is the story of all Christian life—the dying of self and the growing of Christ in the heart. So long as there remains any self-will, any in-submission, any spirit of disobedience, any unconquered self, asserting its authority against the will of Christ, so long is our consecration incomplete.

This lesson has its very practical bearing on all our common, every-day life. Naturally we want to have our own way. We like to carry out our own plans and ambitions. We are apt to feel, too, that we have failed in life when we cannot realize these hopes. This is the world's

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standard. The successful man is the one who is able to master all life's circumstances and make them serve him in his career. He is the man who "increases" until he fills a large place among men. The world has little praise or admiration for the man who "decreases" in his bulk, brilliance, power, or prosperity. But we who read the word of God know that there is an increase in men's eyes which is a dwarfing, shrinking, and shrivelling of the life in God's sight. We know also that there is a decrease in human eyes, which as God sees it, is a glorious enlargement and growth.

The greatest thing possible in any life is to have the divine plan for it fulfilled, the divine will go on in it, even though it thwarts every human hope and dashes away every earthly dream. It is not easy for us to learn the lesson that God's ways are always better for us than our own. We make our little plans and begin to carry them out. We think we have all things arranged for the greatest happiness and the best good. Then God's plan breaks in upon ours and we look down through our

Loſing Self in Chriſt

tears upon the ſhattered fragments of very rare viſions. It ſeems wreck, loſs, and diſaſter. But no—it is only God’s larger, wiſer, better plan diſplacing our little, imperfect, ſhortsighted one. Is it true that God really thinks about our lives and has a purpoſe of his own for them, a place he would have us fill, a work he would have us do, a wiſneſs he would have us bear? It ſeems when we think of it that this is ſcarcely poſſible—that each one of the lives of his countless children ſhould be perſonally and individually thought about by the Father. Yet we know that this is true of the leaſt and lowlieſt of us. Surely if God cares enough for us to make a plan for our life, a heavenly plan, it muſt be better than any plan of ours could be. It is a high honor, therefore, for us to let his plan take the place of ours and go on in our lives, whatever the coſt and the pain may be to us.

*“ This thing on which thy heart was ſet, this thing
that cannot be,
This weary, diſappointing day that dawns, my
friend, for thee :*

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*Be comforted ; God knoweth best, the God whose
name is Love,*

*Whose tender care is evermore our passing lives
above.*

*He sends thee disappointment ? Well, then, take
it from his hand.*

*Shall God's appointment seem less good than what
thyself had planned ?*

*"'Twas in thy mind to go abroad. He bids thee
stay at home.*

*Oh ! happy home ; thrice happy, if to it, thy Guest,
he come.*

*'Twas in thy mind thy friend to see. The Lord
says, 'Nay, not yet.*

*Be confident ; the meeting time thy Lord will not
forget.*

*'Twas in thy mind to work for him. His will is,
'Child, sit still ;'*

*And surely 'tis thy blessedness to mind the Master's
will.*

*Accept thy disappointment, friend, thy gift from
God's own hand.*

*Shall God's appointment seem less good than what
thyself had planned ?"*

This law of the dying of self and the magnifying of Christ is the only way to true usefulness. Not until self has been renounced is

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any one ready for true Christian service. While we are thinking how this or that will affect us, whether it will pay us to make this sacrifice or that self-denial; while we are consulting our own ease, our own comfort, our own interest or advantage in any form, we have not yet learned fully what the love of Christ means.

This projecting of self into our serving of our fellow-men mars the service and hinders its effectiveness. We wonder if the person is worthy, and if he is not, we do not want to waste our love upon him. We resent with impatience the lack of gratitude in those we aid. We decline to serve others because they are beneath us. That is, we put all our life on a commercial basis and unless it seems to promise well in the way of outcome, we are not ready for it. We need to learn the true meaning of Christ's love, for he never asks whether we are worthy or not, nor does he keep account of the number of times he has forgiven us. The law of love, which is the one law of all Christian life, does not follow the world's maxims. It is

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not so much for so much. It asks not if there will be a return. It does not keep account of treatment received and strike a balance for the governance of its future actions. It gives and serves and helps regardless of what it has received or may receive.

*“According to my cup I must
Pour out my wine, although the dust
Doth drink it up when it should be
A living draught perpetually ;
And I must break my wheaten bread,
Though none upon its strength are fed.”*

This law of the dying of self and the magnifying of Christ is the secret of Christian peace. When Christ is small and self is large in us life cannot be deeply restful. Everything annoys us. We grow impatient of whatever breaks our comfort. We grieve over little trials. We find causes for discontent in merest trifles. We resent whatever would hinder or oppose us. There is no blue sky in the picture of which self is the centre. There are no stars shining overhead. It begins and ends

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in a little patch of dusty floor, with gray walls surrounding it and shutting it in.

But when self decreases and Christ increases, then the picture is enlarged and takes in all of heaven's over-arching beauty. Then the stars shine down into its night and sunshine bathes its day. Then the life of friction and worry is changed into quietness and peace. When the glory of Christ streams over this little, cramped, fretted, broken life of ours, peace comes and the love of Christ brightens every spot and sweetens all bitterness. Trials are easy to bear when self is small and Christ is large.

We are apt to grow weary of the bitter, sorrowful struggle that goes on in our hearts, evermore, between the old nature and the new, between the old self and the new Christ. It seems sometimes as if it never would be ended. It seems, too, at times, as if we were making no progress in the struggle, as if there were no decreasing of self, no increasing of Christ. We find the old evil things unconquered still, after years of battling—the old envies and

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jealousies, the old tempers, the old greed, the old irritabilities, the old doubt and fear and unbelief. Will there never be release from this conflict?

Yes, if only we live patiently and bravely, in faith and love and loyalty, self will decrease and Christ will increase until he fills our whole life. If we reach up ever toward the light, our past of failure and unworthiness will be left behind and we shall grow into the fulness of the stature of Christ. The new will conquer and expel the old until it becomes "None of self and all of thee."

Growing by Abandonment

*I hear it singing, singing sweetly,
Softly in an undertone ;
Singing as if God had taught it,
“ It is better farther on.”*

*By night and day it sings the same song,
Sings it while I sit alone ;
Sings it so the heart may hear it—
“ It is better farther on.”*

*It sings upon the grave, and sings it—
Sings it when the heart would groan ;
Sings it when the shadows darken—
“ It is better farther on.”*

*Farther on ? How much farther ?
Count the mile-stones one by one.
No ! No counting—only trusting ;
“ It is better farther on.”*

—JOSEPH PARKER.

CHAPTER NINTH

Growing by Abandonment



GENIAL author has written a little book on the evolution of an ideal, taking as her text the quotation, "The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment." Most people think that the way of life is by acquisition, by getting things and keeping them, by accumulating and conserving. But the saying is true—it is by abandonment, by letting things go and leaving them behind, when they have fulfilled their purpose, that we really grow. Bulk is not greatness. It is in being, not in having, that character consists.

Saint Paul gives us in a remarkable sentence a plan of life, a scheme of progress. He says it is by forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forward to things that are before, that we grow. As we think of it, we see

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that this is the only true way to live. Childhood is very sweet and beautiful, but no one would want to stay a child always. The boy is not sorry when he feels himself growing into manhood. He seems to be leaving much behind—much that is winning and attractive. Perhaps his mother grieves as she sees him losing one by one the things she has always liked—his curls, his boyish ways, his delicate features, the qualities that kept him a child, and taking on elements of strength, marks of manhood.

But if he remained always a boy, a child with curls and dainty tastes, what a pitiful failure his life would be! He can press to the goal of perfection only by putting away, letting go, leaving behind, the sweetness, the gentleness, the simplicity, the innocence of boyhood.

The same principle runs through all life. Manhood is stern, strong, heroic. It would seem that childhood is more beautiful. It is sweeter, daintier, more winning. But who regrets passing from childhood's gentleness and

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attractiveness to man's strength and ruggedness, and man's hard tasks?

Nazareth was easier by far to Jesus than what came after—the homelessness, the long journeys, the enmities, the persecutions, the struggles, the sufferings. But when he left the carpenter shop and went to the Jordan to be baptized, thence to the wilderness to be tempted, and thence started on the way to his cross, was he sorry?

*“That evening when the Carpenter swept out
The fragrant shavings from the workshop floor,
And placed the tools in order, and shut to
And barred, for the last time, the humble door,
And going on his way to save the world,
Turned from the lab’rer’s lot for evermore,
I wonder—was he glad?”*

*“That morning when the Carpenter walked forth,
From Joseph’s doorway in the glimmering
light,
And bade his holy mother long farewell,
And, through the rose-shot skies with dawning
bright,
Saw glooming dark the shadows of the Cross,
Yet, seeing, set his feet toward Calvary’s height,
I wonder—was he sad?”*

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He was eager to go forth from the quiet of his peasant home and his happy life among friends and neighbors in the little Galilean village, to enter upon the great work for which he had come into the world. There are many intimations of this eagerness in the story of our Lord's life as given in the gospels. He spoke of the baptism with which he must be baptized, and said that he was straitened until it should be accomplished. At another time he said: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." At one time it is said that as he and his disciples were on their way, going up to Jerusalem, Jesus pressed on before them so eagerly that the disciples were amazed and awed, unable to understand his eagerness. He knew what awaited him at Jerusalem, but instead of holding back, he hastened on, impelled by a resistless desire to do his Father's will.

It would have been easier, knowing all the future, for him to stay in his mother's home at Nazareth, working at his trade, and living a

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quiet life, than to go forth into the way of struggle, toil, and pain, which led to a cross. But he forgot the easy, pleasant things which were behind, and with joy entered on the harder way before him as he pressed toward the goal. A word in the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame.

So every true and worthy life rejoices to leave the ease and rest and comfort of the days of training and preparation and go on to where the burdens are heavier, the paths steeper and rougher and the thorns sharper, if thus fuller, larger manhood is reached.

It takes courage and resolution to continue ever moving away from our past. We would like to keep the things we have learned to love, and we do not want to break away from them. Some people are not willing to leave their sorrows behind. They never come out of the shadows of their griefs. They stay back with their dead. They do not wish to come away from the graves where they have buried their

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heart's treasures. They never forget their sorrows.

But this is not God's will for us. Of course we cannot forget love—that never can be our duty. We cannot but miss sweet companionships—we would be unloving, and disloyal to our heart's covenants, if we could. But there is a way of forgetting our griefs in which we still keep all that is sacred of the friendships which have meant so much to us, and yet go on with joy and victory in our hearts, to a life all the richer and more beautiful because of our sorrow.

We should never leave behind us anywhere in life, in any experience, anything that is good and true. George Eliot said: "I desire no future that will break the ties of the past." We are not living wisely if we are losing anything out of our hands as we go on. In nature nothing is ever really lost. When wood is burned its form is changed, but no particle of it is wasted. The blossom is not lost when it falls off to make room for the coming of the fruit. The lovely things of childhood are not lost

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when they are given up for the things that displace them. Whatever is beautiful stays in the life always—only the outward form perishes or changes. We never can lose our friends. They may leave us as to their visible presence, passing from us so that we cannot see them any more; but what they were to us is ours forever; what they did for us,—the impressions they left upon us, the lessons they taught us, the touches they put upon our characters, these we never can lose.

Abandonment therefore is not losing. We only give up the hull while we keep the kernel. The flower fades, but its fragrance remains in our hearts, and its life is continued in the fruit which comes in the blossom's place. The song is forgotten, but its melody stays in our memory and its sweetness in our life. We leave the days behind us when we have lived them, and never can go over them again. But the gifts the days brought us from God, the lessons we learned from their experiences, it would be treason for us to forget, or to fail to carry with us.

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Sometimes we say that if only we could live our past time over again we would live it better. This is an unavailing yearning, for time never turns back. But we may live to-morrow as we would live to-day if we could go over it a second time. That is a true use of our past—penitence over our mistakes and follies, and the learning of the lessons for the days that yet remain.

So we may go on, giving up the things that are dear, but losing nothing that was good or worthy in them, forgetting the things that are behind, but passing ever to new things. Thus we shall ever go from good to better, from blossom to fruit, from hope to fruition, from prophecy to fulfilment. Henry van Dyke puts it thus:

*Let me but live my life from year to year,
With forward face and unreluctant soul,
Not hastening to nor turning from the goal;
Nor mourning things that disappear
In the dim past, nor holding back in fear
From what the future veils; but with a whole
And happy heart that pays its toll
To youth and age, and travels on with cheer.*

Growing by Abandonment

*So let the way wind up the hill or down,
Through rough or smooth ; the journey will be
joy,
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy,—
New friendship, high adventure, and a crown.
I shall grow old, but never lose life's zest,
Because the road's last turn will be the best.*

Leaving Things Andone

- “ *One of these days when the sun sinks low,
With the glory of God in its after-glow.
We will pause and think of the things undone,
Of what we lost.
Of what we have won.—
One of these days.*
- “ *One of these days, when we older grow.
With the glory of God in our after-glow.
We will pause and think of what we have won,
And God grant naught will be found undone,
One of these days.”*

CHAPTER TENTH

Leaving Things Undone



AMONG the memorabilia of a good man in ancient times it is said: "He left nothing undone." That is more than can be said of most people. The best of us are apt to leave many things undone. In our formula of confession we are accustomed to say: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done."

Perhaps we do not often think of it, however, as really sinful not to do things. We admit that it is wrong to treat another unkindly; do we understand that it is wrong also not to show the kindness we had the call to show? We know it is sinful to speak a harsh or bitter word to another; do we always remember that it is a sin not to say the word of cheer or com-

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fort we had the opportunity to say, and which our neighbor so much needed and longed to hear? If we must give account for idle words, we must also give account for idle silences.

*“ What silences we keep year after year
With those who are most near to us and dear ;
We live beside each other day by day,
And speak of myriad things, but seldom say
The full sweet word that lies just in our reach,
Beneath the commonplace of common speech.*

*“ Then out of sight and out of reach they go—
These close, familiar friends who loved us so !
And sitting in the shadow they have left,
Alone with loneliness, and sore bereft,
We think with vain regret, of some fond word
That once we might have said, and they have
heard.”*

Very much of our Lord's teaching refers to sins of not doing. The man with the one talent was condemned, not because he used his talent in any wrong way, but because he did not use it at all. The priest and the Levite did the wounded man no injury. They probably even felt kindly toward him and expressed sympa-

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thy with him. Yet the story reads as if they sinned grievously against him. They wronged him by not giving him the help and the relief he needed and which they had been sent there expressly to give. Their passing by on the other side was a cruel wrong against him—a sin of leaving a duty undone.

In our Lord's description of the Judgment, those on the left hand are condemned not for evil things which they had done, but for their neglect of love's duties. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." They had not oppressed the poor, they had not robbed men, they had not gone about wounding others. Nothing whatever is said of their sins, saving that they had not done the deeds of love to those who needed such ministries. They had left undone things which they ought to have done.

It is in this way that many people fail most seriously in living. No grave fault can be

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found with their conduct, with the things they do. They are upright, true, diligent in business, but their lives are full of omissions and neglects. How was it yesterday with you? Did you see one who needed help, comfort, relief, or encouragement, and did you fail to do anything for him? Do not many of us need to pray with the saintly man who used to say, "Lord, forgive my sins, especially my sins of omission"?

Many of the best of us leave many things untouched which we ought to have finished. Most men die with many tasks only begun and left uncompleted. Life is too large for us; we cannot do all that it is our duty to do. After we have done our best we have not attained even our own standard of what we ought to have done. None of us do any day all the things we meant to do, and none of us ever do anything as well as we intended to do it.

*"I wonder if ever a song was sung
But the singer's heart sang sweeter!
I wonder if ever a rhyme was rung
But the thought surpassed the meter!"*

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*“ I wonder if ever a sculptor wrought
Till the cold stone echoed his ardent thought !
Or if ever a painter with light and shade
The dream of his inmost heart portrayed !*

*“ I wonder if ever a rose was found
And there might not be a fairer !
Or if ever a glittering gem was ground
And we dreamed not of a rarer !*

*“ Ah, never on earth do we find the best,
But it waits for us in the land of rest ;
And a perfect thing we shall never behold
Till we pass the portals of shining gold.”*

Indeed no one ever ought to do everything that he might do. There is a duty of omitting. Some people scatter their energies over a hundred broad fields of activity when it were far better if they would confine themselves to one little spot which they could transform into a garden of beauty. There are those who know a little of everything under heaven and know nothing well enough to make a definite and accurate statement about it. We should show our wisdom in the selection we make of the things which we shall do. Some people select

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a few things, but choose those that are least worth while, and omit the most important.

Each one of us is set to do but a little fragment of work. No one does all of anything. We are responsible only for the small section that is allotted to us. We should do that well, putting into it our best skill, our utmost faithfulness. Then we need not trouble ourselves about the part we cannot do. That is not our work at all—some other one is waiting to do it, and at the right time he will come forward ready for it. Many of us vex ourselves unnecessarily over things for which we have not the smallest measure of responsibility. We would save ourselves a vast outlay of strength and energy if we would learn to confine ourselves strictly to the things that clearly belong to us. Jean Ingelow teaches us a wise lesson:

I am glad to think

I am not bound to make the world go right,

But only to discover and to do,

With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints.

But we should be certain always really to seek to “discover and to do” our own part, small or

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large, with the utmost faithfulness. Not to do this, to leave undone the things we ought to have done, will be to leave a blank in the universe where there ought to have been good work well done.

So our lesson calls us to earnestness and fidelity in the doing of our allotted tasks. "He left nothing undone." This fine commendation of one man should set us to thinking about ourselves and our own doing. We need not fret about the little that our neighbor does and the much that he is leaving undone; he may be very negligent—perhaps he is—but that is not our matter. Our own life is our matter, however, for we shall have to give account for it. What blanks are we leaving, you and I, these passing days? What things that we ought to have done for others—things of love, kindness, encouragement, uplifting, cheer, comfort—have we been leaving undone? What things that we ought to have done for our Master—holy living, heroism in duty, firmness in purpose, self-effacement that he may be honored—have we been omitting?

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The only way to make sure of leaving nothing undone at the last is to do each day's work in its day. Let us never postpone or defer any duty that comes to our hand, for we shall not pass this way again. Let us make sure before we sleep any night that nothing has been omitted that day, no little task, no service of love. Life is too sacred to be marred by blanks and breaks. One of the darkest shadows that can fall upon any soul in its last days is the shadow cast by the things left undone.

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*“ There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are pure and true :
Then give to the world the best you have,
And the best shall come back to you.*

*“ Give love, and love to your heart will flow,
A strength in your utmost need ;
Have faith, and a score of hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.*

*“ For life is the mirror of king and slave,
'Tis just what you are and do ;
Then give to the world the best you have
And the best will come back to you.”*

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

Living for the Best Things



IN one of our Lord's lesser parables there is a pleasant story of a man who was in the pearl business. He was always on the quest for pearls. He must have been a lover of beauty, for pearls are very beautiful. In ancient times they were regarded as the richest of all gems. Writers of those days speak in highest praise of their value.

The poets had romantic fancies about the origin of the pearl. They said it was first a drop of dew which fell from heaven and which a shell-fish opened its mouth and took in. Within the shell the crystal dewdrop was condensed, doubling its original perfections. They said, further, that the pearl took its hue from the heavens, and its iridescence from the seven colors of the rainbow.

The story of the true origin of the pearl

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though not so romantic as that of the poet's, is very interesting. Pearls are not precious stones, as are diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. They are of animal origin. They are found in certain shell-fish, especially in the pearl oyster. It is generally supposed that they are the fruit of wounding and suffering. Minute foreign substances, like tiny grains of sand, find their way within the shell. Friction and suffering are caused and the wounds are covered by a secretion which the oyster exudes, which hardens into what we know as pearls. Hence comes the saying, "The oyster mends its shell with a pearl."

The man in the Master's story sought for pearls—he went over the world looking for them and buying all he could get. It is said, too, that he sought for goodly pearls, that is, for the best—the whitest, purest, largest pearls he could find. Thus he represents those who seek for good things in life—not the good, merely, but the very good, the best things. There are good things, and things that are better, and things that are best. We do not

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have to choose merely between the good and the bad, but between the good and the best.

It is worth our while to ask ourselves whether we are indeed striving for the best things, or whether our aims are lower than the highest. We may apply the test to every department of our life, and not alone to moral and spiritual things. Religion has to do with all our days and all our tasks. Hiram Golf said he would be judged by the way he made and mended shoes. Stradivarius, the old violin-maker, said that he would rob God and leave a blank in the universe if he did not make good violins. Even God, he said, could not make man's best without man's best to help him. In every line of duty we rob God if we are content with less than the best we can do.

This is true of all our work. It is a sin to do anything carelessly or in a slovenly way. Diligence in business is bracketed in the Scriptures with fervency of spirit and serving the Lord. Nothing ever should satisfy us but the best we can do.

“Not failure, but low aim is sin.”

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In the culture of character no ideal but the perfect one ever should be set before us. We are all builders—we are set to build radiant temples, fit to be dwelling places for God. The trouble is, however, that we are satisfied to build poor little wooden barracks instead of temples of marble and gold. We should never be willing to be less noble and beautiful in our character than the noblest and most beautiful. We should never be content with even the fairest human loveliness alone. Artists say that a picture without a bit of sky in it is defective. It is flat and low and lacks height. A life without sky, which does not reach up and take in heaven, has not attained its best. This world is very beautiful. It is our Father's world. It is strewn with pearls. We do well to seek these shining gems and gather them into our hands. But if in our quest we fail to find the one pearl of great price, we have failed to find anything which we can keep forever.

We need not even ask what the Master meant by the pearl of great price. It is life, eternal

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life. It is Christ himself, with all that his salvation is to those who accept him. There was only one great pearl valuable enough to be purchased at the price this merchant paid—all that he had. Jesus Christ is peerless and alone in his greatness among men. He is the one altogether lovely. No one of all who ever knew him claimed that there was any sin or fault in him. No witness could be found to testify to any evil thing that he had done.

Not only was he without sin, but in him all moral and spiritual beauty found its complete development. Plato expressed a desire that the moral law might become a living personage, that men seeing it thus incarnate, might be charmed by its beauty. Plato's wish was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The holiness and the beauty of the divine law were revealed in him. The Beatitudes contain an outline of the ideal life, but the Beatitudes are only a rescript of the life of Christ himself. What he taught about love was but his own love stated in a course of living lessons for his friends to learn. When he said we should be patient, gentle,

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thoughtful, forgiving, and kind, he was only saying: "Follow me."

Jesus called himself the Son of man—not the son of a man, but the Son of man, that is, of humanity. Someone suggests that if we could gather from all who ever have lived the little fragments of lovely character which have blossomed out in each and bring all these fragments into one personality, we should have the beauty of Jesus Christ. In one person you find gentleness, in another meekness, in another purity of heart, in another humility, in another kindness, in another patience—there is no one so sunken in sin that in him there is not some tiny flower of beauty. But in the holiest of men there are only two or three qualities of ideal beauty, with much that is stained and flecked mingled with these qualities. In Christ, however, the Son of man, all that is excellent is found, with no flaw. He is perfect man, not only sinless, but complete in his person. He is the pearl of great price.

As Saviour, also, Jesus is without equal. There was only one peerless pearl—there is

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only one Redeemer, only one who can save. "In him was life." He is the one fountain of life at which every one of us must fill his cup if he would partake of life. He is the light of the world, the one light at which every one of us must light his little lamp if he would shine on the darkness of this world. He is the one Saviour in whom we must all believe if we would have eternal life. He is the one only Friend in whom any of us can find what our hearts hunger for of love, of companionship, of all that divine friendship means.

When this merchant had found the one pearl, how did he make it his own? He bought it. What did he give for it? "He went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Nor was it a bad investment. Sometimes men dispose of all they have and invest in some scheme which only fools them, eats up their possessions and leaves them beggared. But nobody was ever a loser from selling all his other pearls and buying the pearl of great price. It is the true riches, imperishable and eternal.

In all life we find this principle—that we must

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give up the lesser to get the greater. A young girl away at school wrote to a friend that she liked her school very much—everybody was lovely and everything was beautiful—but she thought she would not go back another year, because she could not bear to be away from her happy home. The friend wrote her, saying that her work now was to make the most of herself, to have her powers developed, disciplined and trained, to attain to whatsoever things are lovely in womanhood, and that it might be necessary for her to give up the pleasure, the ease, the freedom of life at home, for a while, in order to reach the nobleness visioned in her heart when she prayed or sat at Christ's table. "He went and sold all that he had, and bought it." We can get the best in no other way.

A man says: "I know I am not as good as I ought to be, but it is hard to give up my faults and vices." No matter how hard it is, our Master calls us up higher, and we should give up all that is unworthy in order to obey him. We get wedded to our routines of life and do not like to sacrifice them for the sake of new

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things. A familiar saying is: "The good is often the enemy of the best." The good is never worthy of us if there be a better possible. Men do not keep the old machinery in their mills when better machines have been invented. In schools and colleges the new education has supplanted the old. The ancient text-books are of no use now—indeed, we have to get new text-books almost every year to keep pace with the rapid march of science. Some of the older people remember the day of tallow candles, but these gave way to lamps, and lamps to gas, and gas to electricity. Some of us remember the old mail coach and the long wait for letters coming only a few miles. Now we have the hourly mail deliveries and the swift trains and steamers. And impatient with even this slow communication we talk over telephone wires with a friend a thousand miles away and have our telegraph service girdling the world. Again the better is crowding out the good, and we are beginning to talk across the sea without wires.

In the little story, the merchant had gathered

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many pearls, goodly pearls, until he possessed a rare collection. Then he saw one pearl which far surpassed in beauty and value any pearl of all that he owned. He was so enraptured with it, and so eager to possess it, that he sold all his large store and bought this one noble, peerless pearl. And he never regretted the exchange, for the one was worth more than all the many.

We can well afford to give up all things else to get Christ. If we have all other things and do not have Christ, we are hopelessly poor. But if we have Christ we are rich though our hands be empty of earth's treasures.

*“O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but thy pure love alone ;
O may thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown ;
Strange fires far from my soul remove ;
My every act, word, thought, be love.”*

The law of Christian life is progress—progress by giving up the good to take the better. We never come to a point where we may rest content because we have reached the full meas-

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ure of our attainment and achievement. Heaven ever lies above us, however high we climb. There always are better things to gain, however full our hands may be of goodly treasures. Sweet as is the joy that fills our hearts to-day, there is a still sweeter song that we may learn to sing.

*“ The song unsung more sweet shall ring
Than any note that yet has rung ;
More sweet than any earthly thing.*

*The song unsung !
A harp there lies, untouched, unstrung
As yet by man, but time shall bring
A player by whose art and tongue
This song shall sound to God the King ;
The world shall cling as ne’er it clung
To God and heaven, and all shall sing
The song unsung.”*

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*“ ’Tis not for man to trifle—
Life is brief, and sin is here.
Our age is but the falling of a leaf,
The dropping of a tear.
Not many lives, but only one, have we,
One, only one ;
How sacred should that one life be !
We have no time to sport away the hours ;
All must be earnest in a world like ours.”*

CHAPTER TWELFTH

Serving and Following Christ



ERVING Christ is something very practical. Some people seem to think it is something aside from their common life, something that belongs only to Sundays, something that can be done only in certain holy moments. But it is really one's very life, or it is nothing. It does not consist merely in acts of worship. There are times when one's first and most sacred duty is to stay away from a religious service. A young mother was regretting that she had been able to attend church so rarely during the six months since her baby came. But if the baby really needed a mother's care all those months, she would have been unfaithful to her Master if she had neglected it even to attend church services.

A pleasant story-poem tells of a young girl left by a dying mother in charge of a little sick sister. All her days and nights were filled

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with this care of love. She could not attend church services nor take any part in Christ's work outside of her little home. It grieved her, for she loved Christ and longed to be of use in his service.

One night she dreamed that the King had come, and she stood before him, painfully explaining why she had not been able to do any work for him because all her time and strength were required in caring for the suffering child. "And the child is mine," said the King. She could not have served him better than in tending this little one of his that needed her care and was her special charge. If she had failed in this duty even in order to attend church services, if she had neglected this sick child in order to help others outside her home, the Master would have been grieved.

Our duty in serving Christ lies always near to our hand. It is never some impossible thing that he wants us to do. There was an artist who wished to leave behind him some noble work that would live through all time. He sought for material fine enough for his dream.

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He travelled to distant lands and journeyed far and near in vain quest for what he sought. He came home an aged man, weary and disappointed, and found that from the common clay beside his own door his old apprentice had made marvels of loveliness which were praised by all who saw them, and had won him fame. So many people longing to do noble things for Christ look far off for the opportunities, missing meanwhile services which wait for them close by their doors. Nothing is grander for us any day than the quiet doing of God's will, simple faithfulness in common duty, making the best of what lies close to our hand.

“ We complain

That 'tis not given us to break some chain,

To scale some peak, to fetch some golden fleece,

To do some mighty deed whose light shall cease

Only when moons no longer wax and wane.

'Tis thus we empty all the springs of life,

To lose the blessing at our very hand ;

For faith and love, with glory as of sun,

Illume the path to peace through every strife.

No work is futile that is nobly planned ;

No deed is little if but greatly done.”

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There is one quiet way all of us may serve Christ if we will—by letting the light of his love shine out in our faces and our lives, to brighten some little spot of earth that needs brightening. About four hundred years ago there lived a man in Italy who wanted to do something for the world. He painted a picture for a little obscure chapel near his home—a picture of the Christ Child and the Mother. Into the face of the Child he painted a soft light which has been a delight and a wonder ever since. It was a warm and hallowed light which brightened the face of the Mother as she bent over her Child, and filled all the scene with a gentle radiance.

The picture was a benediction to the peasants who lived about the village and saw it in the chapel. They had their sorrows, their cares, their struggles, and that soft light cheered and heartened them and made their hard, narrow life mean more to them. They called the painter Ariel, the light-bringer, because he had brought that holy shining into their lives. We may all serve Christ in this way—not by

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painting pictures like Correggio's, but by carrying heavenly light on our faces in the love that shines there and does not fade out in the darkest night.

Always serving Christ means living love's lesson among men. Religious meetings and acts of worship avail nothing in pleasing God if our hearts are full of bitterness and uncharity and if we do not fulfil the law of love. Jesus sharply reproved the religionists of his day because, while they were most punctilious in the observance of the minutest forms and ceremonials they lacked the qualities of mercy, justice, and faith. It is just as true now as it was then that the religion which pleases Christ is a holy life, and a holy life is one in which love rules. It is not enough to be honest and true and upright—we must love each other as Christ loves us; we must be patient, thoughtful, kind, helpful. Here is an evening prayer which will test the life of our busy days:

*“If any word of mine has caused one tear
From other eyes to flow ;*

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*If I have caused one shadow to appear
On any face I know ;
If but one thoughtless word of mine has stung
Some loving heart to-day :
Or if the word I've left unsaid has wrung
A single sigh, I pray,
Thou, tender Heart of love, forgive the sin.
Help me to keep in mind
That if at last I would thy ' Well done ' win,
In word as well as deed I must be kind."*

Then we should serve Christ unweariedly. He does not call us to follow him for a little while, but until we are released and called home, There are things which test our perseverance. Some people are hindered in their earnestness in doing good by the ingratitude of those they try to help. Gratitude is very sweet, but Christian love is a holy passion which fails not when it meets no requital, even though it is rejected and insulted. Others are disheartened by the seeming failure of what they do. "Nothing comes of it," they say. But we have the assurance that no true work for Christ is in vain. Somehow, some time, somewhere, all

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that we do for our Master will have its result and its reward.

*“What though the seed be cast by the wayside,
And the birds take it—yet the birds are fed.”*

Though nothing seems to come of the good we do with love, yet Christ is honored, there is blessing in our own hearts, and there will be reward in glory. We may go on serving Christ, therefore, though we see no result. Nothing done for him can fail.

Some are hindered in their work for Christ by sorrow. When they are bereft the tasks are dropped out of their hands. But sorrow does not in any sense release us from the service of our Master.

There is a story of a woman who had had many sorrows. Parents, husband, children, wealth, all were gone. In her great grief she prayed for death, but death came not. She would not take up any of her wonted work for Christ. One night she had a dream. She thought she had gone to heaven. She saw her husband and ran to him with eager joy, ex-

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pecting a glad welcome. But strange to say, no answering joy shone on his face—only surprise and displeasure. “How did you come here?” he asked. “They did not say you were to be sent for to-day. I did not expect you for a long time yet.”

With a bitter cry she turned from him to seek her parents. But instead of the tender love for which her heart was longing, she met from them only the same amazement and the same surprised questions.

“I’ll go to my Saviour,” she cried. “He will welcome me if no one else does.” When she saw Christ there was infinite love in his look, but his words throbbed with sorrow as he said: “Child, child, who is doing your work down there?” At last she understood. She had no right yet to be in heaven. Her work was not finished. She had fled away from her duty.

This is one of the dangers of sorrow, that in our grief for those who are gone we lose our interest in those who are living and slacken our zeal in the work which is allotted to us. When one asked to be allowed to go and bury his

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father before beginning to follow Christ, the answer was, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God." However great our bereavement, we may not drop our tasks until the Master calls us away.

Citizenship in Heaven

*“ It is well to live in the valley sweet,
Where the work of the world is done,
Where the reapers sing in the fields of wheat,
As they toil till the set of sun.
But beyond the meadows the hills I see,
Where the noises of traffic cease,
And I follow a voice that calleth to me
From the hilltop regions of peace.*

*“ Aye, to live is sweet in the valley fair,
And to toil till the set of sun ;
But my spirit yearns for the hilltop's air
When the day and its work are done ;
For a Presence breathes o'er the silent hills,
And its sweetness is living yet ;
The same deep calm all the hillside fills
As breathed over Olivet.”*

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

Citizenship in Heaven



OUR Lord spoke a great deal of a kingdom that is not of this world. He said this kingdom does not come with observation; that is, men do not see its progress; it makes no display of pomp and pageant. He said it is not an outward kingdom, but that its realm is within men's hearts and lives. It was this kingdom which Christ himself came to establish and which he sent his disciples to win for him. He is the King. He sets up no throne in any earthly capital—his throne is in heaven. All who own Christ as Master are subjects of this kingdom, not of this world. Saint Paul puts it very clearly when he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven." Those who belong to Christ are citizens of a heavenly commonwealth.

The thought is very interesting. If you trav-

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el through foreign countries, leaving behind your loved ones and your dearest interests, you will see many beautiful things—mountains and fields, cities, rivers, noble buildings, works of art—but your heart will be in your homeland all the while. Longfellow says:

*Each man's chimney is his golden milestone,
Is the central point, from which he measures
Every distance*

Through the gateways of the world around him.

So it should be with the Christian. He is living in this world for a time, going among the world's people, taking part in the world's affairs, but his heart is in heaven, his true home. His thoughts go continually to that blessed country. His highest interests are there.

This does not mean that we are to neglect our work here. Sometimes men have made the mistake of thinking that they could live near to God only by separating themselves from all earthly life. But this is not the way the Master wants us to do.

The New Testament says not one word against the life of the world. Jesus did not ask that

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his disciples should be taken out of this world—he asked that they should stay here and be kept from the evil. The ancient Greeks thought that toil was vulgar. They had nothing to do with those who wrought in the shops or in the fields. But the religion of Christ from the beginning had the same message for the toiling masses and for the great and mighty. Instead of being antagonistic to godliness, work is a means of grace. We grow best, not away from men and ordinary human experiences, but in the midst of human interests and in connection with common tasks and duties. We grow best in spiritual life when we are doing our part the most diligently in the affairs of earth. “It is through the limitations, the collisions, the surprises, the monotonies of this work-a-day world that we lay hold on the life which is life indeed.”

We are not therefore to retire from the toils and tasks of every-day life in order to cultivate saintliness. Saintliness does not lie on any such pathway, but is to be sought rather on the dusty mart, where men throng, where human

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needs make their appeal. The holiest duties of earth ofttimes are found in places which seem most unheavenly to our eyes.

But we are to do all our work to please the Master. Our secular life should be penetrated by spiritual motives. Instead of unfitting men for doing the world's work, the grace of Christ should make them all the more proficient in secular duties. One may do the lowliest things in a heavenly way. One may work in the humblest calling and make it radiant, and live a saintly life, while another may be engaged in what is regarded as a sacred calling, and yet may do his work in a profane and an undevout manner. A bootblack may be more saintly, may live nearer to God, and may be a better citizen of heaven, than a minister of the gospel, busy in incessant religious duties. Browning represents the angel Gabriel taking a boy's tasks in this world, doing the work well and praising God meanwhile. We have something finer even than that, however, not in a mere poet's fancy, but in gospel story. The Son of God came to earth and lived a human life and

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wrought at a common trade, teaching us that a holy motive glorifies the lowliest work.

*“ Yes, yes, a carpenter—same trade as mine.
It warms my heart as I read that line.
I can stand the hard work, I can stand the poor
pay,
For I’ll see that Carpenter at no distant day.”*

Yet while Jesus wrought at homeliest work his heart was in the holy of holies. He toiled cheerfully and did his work well because he was in communion with his Father. Even while engaged in the world’s work we are to have a lofty, spiritual motive, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. If we do this, God will care for us. George MacDonald says that a man’s business is just to do the will of God, and that then God takes upon himself the care of that man.

When the heavenly citizenship is realized, sorrow finds comfort and blessing. There are those who say that because of the greatness of the sorrow of the race, it would have been better if there never had been any human life in

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this world. But we must wait until sorrow's work is finished before we speak so hopelessly. The deepest joys come out of the sorest griefs. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy," the Master promised. It is when we let into the darkness of our trouble the sure hope of such transformation that the stars shine out in our night. Some people look only down in their time of grief—down into the grave, down into their own breaking hearts, down at the emptiness, the ruin, and the darkness about them. These find no comfort. Others, with grief no less keen, with loss no less sore, look up into the face of God and see love there; look into heaven where their loved ones are; look at the blessed stars of hope which shine above them, and are comforted. Whittier, in "Snow-bound," sets the two aspects of sorrow side by side:

*Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!*

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*Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And love can never lose its own.*

The only life that grows into the best character is that which has its source in heaven. This earth does not afford a large enough sphere for the growth of an immortal life to its full possibility. "A star cannot be imprisoned in a shed; it demands a sky; and to attain perfection and fully display its glory, the soul demands a sky." The difference between the ethical culturist and the true Christian is that the former gathers into his character only human and earthly qualities, while the other builds in Christ and heaven besides.

It is said that astronomers have discovered that a sensitized plate will photograph stars which the eye cannot see even with the strongest telescope. You look with your naked eye and you see many stars. You look into a telescope and you see many more. Then you put your sensitized plate in its place and let the skies look into it for a while; and on the plate

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you find imprinted the image of many other stars unrevealed even by the telescope. A man looks for the beautiful things of character and finds many in human lives. But in the perfect human life of Christ, where all the fulness of divinity is revealed, he finds a thousand lovely things which nowhere else on earth can be found.

A character with none of the beauty of heaven in it is defective. One who never prays, who never ponders the words of God, who holds no fellowship with spiritual things, who lives only on the earth, thinking only earthly thoughts, groping ever in the glooms and mists of doubt and fear, may grow into a measure of beauty and may do some noble work, but he has missed the best—for the best can be found only in Jesus Christ. “He who never connects God with his daily life knows nothing of the spiritual meaning and the uses of life; nothing of the calm, strong patience with which ills may be endured; of the gentle, tender comfort which the Father’s love can minister; of the blessed rest to be realized in his forgiving love,

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his tender Fatherhood; of the deep, peaceful sense of the infinite One ever near, a refuge and strength."

There is more culture, more spiritual inspiration and uplift, in one hour's study of the character of Christ, than in years and years of the study of earth's best lives and rarest wisdom. It is a law of life that our thoughts build our character. If we meditate on the purity, the holiness, the goodness, the love, the righteousness, of God, these qualities will print themselves upon our own hearts. Saint Paul has given us an infallible direction for the best spiritual culture. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Then he adds, "These things do: and the God of peace shall be with you." If our citizenship is truly in heaven, we will receive inspiration and strength from above for all our life. It is never easy to live worthily

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and victoriously in this world. From first to last, life is a struggle between the natural and the spiritual. The gains we make must be won always in the face of antagonism. The rewards and honors of life are only for "him that overcometh." We never can live victoriously if we fight alone. But if we are living in communion with Christ, we have all the strength of omnipotence with us in every struggle, in every striving, under every burden. Christ is alive and is with us always.

"Why do I ask and question ?

He is ever coming to me,

Morning and noon and evening,

If I had but eyes to see ;

And the daily load grows lighter,

The daily cares grow sweet,

For the Master is near, the Master is here ;

I have only to sit at his feet."

Outside a garden wall hangs a noble vine which every year bears its great wealth of purple clusters. When you look for its root you find that it is inside the wall. Its home is in the garden where it has all care and nurture, while

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its fruit hangs outside where the hungry may feed upon it. It should be thus with us. With the roots of our life in heaven, we should bear fruit in this world to feed the hunger of men.

*“ When one that holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings ;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.’*

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*“ I would have gone : God bade me stay ;
I would have worked : God bade me rest.
He broke my will from day to day,
He read my yearnings unexpressed,
And said them nay.*

*“ Now I would stay : God bids me go ;
Now I would rest : God bids me work.
He breaks my heart tossed to and fro,
My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk
And vex me so.*

*“ I go, Lord, where thou sendest me ;
Day after day I plod and moil ;
But, Christ my God, when will it be
That I may let alone my toil,
And rest with thee ? ”*

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

Sent



WE are all sent from God. At least we are unless we refuse to be sent. We are ready enough to admit that certain persons have been sent. For example, the Baptist. "There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John." Yes, some one says, but he was only one man, and he had a unique mission. He came specifically to herald the Messiah. Then there were the apostles, too—they were sent by the Master. The name apostle means sent. Yes, but there were only twelve of them, and they were Christ's personal friends, whom he had specially trained. It is easy to understand that they were sent by their Master. But our case is different. We belong to a great uncounted throng. Can it be that we are sent from God, that each one of us is sent?

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Yes, each one of us is sent on an errand all our own, with our own word to speak, with some particular blessing intrusted to us for the world, which if we do not carry will never reach those for whom it was prepared. In the parable, two men were sent, one after the other, to help the wounded man, but both of them in turn passed on, not doing what they were sent to do. The Lord had to send a third man before he got that errand done. We are all sent on errands just as definite. What if we fail to do the things of love which we were sent to do, or to speak the word our Master sent us to speak?

*“ Condemned for silence ? Yes, ah, yes !
Unspoken words have no redress ;
For who must bear this awful cost :
God sent a word, and it was lost ? ”*

*“ If any word thou sendest me,
God, let me speak it clear for thee.”*

It does not follow that every one is sent to do something large or conspicuous. The lowly things, the little unnamed things of love, are

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just as important in their place as the great things. A poet represents a buttercup amid the grass, crying to the great sun in the sky, in despair over its uselessness in comparison with the sun itself, which filled all the world with light. The sun bade the little flower not to despair.

*“God hung me in the great blue sky
To light the world with my one big eye,
To show men how they are living.
But he put you down in the meadow lot.
The world is fairer than if you were not.”*

We live best when we are most nearly what God made us to be, when we do most nearly what he sent us to do. A writer says that “religion is indeed a new picture of Jesus of Nazareth.” Our errand in this world is in a small way the same that Christ’s errand was. He does not now himself, in person, go about doing good—we are to go for him. The only hands Christ has for doing kindnesses are our hands. The only feet he has to run the errands of love are our feet. The only voice he has to speak cheer to the troubled is our voice.

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There is a story of a little child that had been put to bed in a dark room. She fretted at being left alone, and her mother brought her doll, Happy, to be with her. But that did not satisfy the child—she begged her mother to stay in the room with her. The mother reminded her that she had Happy and God, and need not be afraid. Soon the child was heard sobbing again. When the mother returned and chided her, the child said: “O, mother, I don’t want Happy, and I don’t want God—I want someone with a skin face.”

We are all very much like the child. In our loneliness and heart hunger, and in our sorrow and suffering, even Christ in his spiritual presence does not meet all our need. We crave the human touch, the human voice, the human love. Nothing else will quite make real to us even the divine gentleness and love. And it is one of the condescensions of grace that usually the Master reveals himself to us in a friend, comes to us incarnated in a human life. Thus it comes that he sends us out to represent him. We are to be hands and face and voice and

Sent

heart to him. He says, "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you."

If we would understand what our mission is, we have but to learn what the mission of Christ was. Think of the personal influence of his life among men. He went about doing good, not merely by his works of wonder, as when he healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, and wrought other miracles, but by a ministry of common kindness, helpfulness, sympathy, cheer, encouragement, and inspiration. Every one who met him carried away a blessing from his presence.

He is not here now to continue such a ministry, but he sends us to do it. By the coffin of a young Christian girl a bosom friend said: "Everywhere she went, flowers blossomed in her path, and the air was sweeter when she had passed through a room." This should be true of all Christ's friends. If he sends us we must expect to carry on the ministry which he began.

Christ was sent to this world, also, to bring love into it. Of course there was love in the world

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before he came—human love, natural love. There was domestic love. There were some very sacred friendships among men. But Christ came to bring divine love to this earth. He not only told men how they should love, but he lived out this love in his own life. He showed such patience, such gentleness, such thoughtfulness, such abandonment of self, such interest in others, as the world had never seen before. At last his heart broke on the cross in loving the unworthy and in his desire to save them.

This was Christ's mission. "So send I you" means that our mission is the same—not merely to talk love, but to live it. It is this love that the world needs to bless it and save it. It is this love that Christians need to make their lives what the Master wants them to be, and to give them influence among men.

There was an artist who had painted a great picture. People admired it and praised it, and yet to all who saw it it seemed to want something to make it perfect. Its tone was not rich. It lacked warmth and life. The artist

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was conscious of some missing feature in his picture and studied long to find out what it was. At length he took his brush and put on his canvas a slight touch of red. That changed everything.

Much of our Christian life seems also to lack something to bring it up to what it should be. It may have in it much that is beautiful. It is blameless in its moralities. It is active in benevolences. It is full of kindness to the poor. It is faithful in its religious duties. Yet it needs something to bring it up to the ideal which the Master set for his friends. It needs more love. We must get more of the red of Christ's heart into our lives, into our serving of others.

We are conscious of not living as Christ lived, and as he wants us to live. Here and there some saintly Christian shows us in humility, meekness, patience, and self-denial, in the spirit of helping and serving, a vision of love as Christ lived it out in his life. But we must confess that our Christian life as a rule needs a touch of red to give the picture the warmth

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and glow it must have if it would realize the Master's ideal.

It is to show this divine love that we are sent from God—to show it in our own lives, not merely to preach it. This is the evangel that will save the world and convert the wilderness into a garden of roses.

Christ came to lift men up to a higher, truer, nobler life. This is our mission, too. The best way to help others is not by trying to build embankments about them to protect them from temptation, but rather by putting into their hearts the strength and heavenliness which shall lift them above the power of evil, and make them overcomers by the force of the divine life in them.

During a great flood in the Mississippi, which threatened the destruction of the city of New Orleans, two men stood on the levee, watching the rising waters. One asked the other, "If you had the strength and the money to use at will, what would you do for our city?" Not having thought of the matter in this definite way, the gentleman referred the question back

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to his friend. "What would you do?" "I would build these dykes so wide and so high," he answered, "that no flood could ever endanger the city again. That would be the finest thing any man could do for New Orleans." The other thought a moment and then said, "I would not do that. If I were able, I would get my arms beneath the city, and lift it so high that no flood could ever endanger it again."

Christ was sent not to build sheltering walls round men, to shut off danger from them—for then they never could grow strong—but to put into their hearts new life, new courage, new hope, new strength, so as to lift them beyond the reach of the world's evil. That is the best, too, that we can do for others. We cannot destroy sin nor shut it away by dykes so that it will no more assail, but we can help to make men whom sin cannot reach.

We are sent to continue in this world the work which Christ began to do. If we fail to do our part, there will be a blank instead of Christian work well done. Christ has made himself de-

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pendent upon us. The vine bears no fruit itself—the fruit must come on the branches. If the branches then fail in fruitfulness, the vine has failed. If we realize that we are sent from Christ to every new duty, to every home that needs us, it will put a new meaning into all our life. We will go forth each morning, sent by the Master, for the day's tasks, and will hasten to finish them well before the day is done.

“ The time is short !

*If thou wouldst work for God, it must be now ;
If thou wouldst win the garland for thy brow,
Redeem the time.*

“ Shake off earth's sloth !

*Go forth with staff in hand while yet 'tis day ;
Set out with girded loins upon the way,
Up ! linger not !*

“ Fold not thy hands !

*What has the pilgrim of the cross and crown
To do with luxury or couch of down ?
On, pilgrim, on ! ”*

Gladdened to Gladden

*Stand in the sunshine sweet
And treasure every ray,
Nor seek with stubborn feet
The darksome way.*

*Have courage ! Keep good cheer !
Our longest time is brief.
To those who hold you dear
Bring no more grief.*

*But cherish blisses small,
Grateful for least delight
That to your lot doth fall,
However slight.*

*And lo ! all hearts will bring
Love, to make glad your days :
Blessings untold will spring
About your ways.*

—CELIA THAXTER.

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

Gladdened to Gladden



PERHAPS we do not think often enough of the responsibility of joy. When God makes us glad the gladness is not to end with ourselves—we are to pass it on. The Lord said two things to Abraham: “I will bless thee” and “Be thou a blessing.” The blessing was not merely for Abraham’s own sake, nor was it to terminate in him. He was the custodian of this gift of God, that he in turn might give its benefits to others. It is told of Thoreau, that when he had cut wood and built a fire and warmed himself, he would call himself before the bar of conscience and require himself to answer the question, “What did you do while you were warm?” Not many of us think that being warmed by the fire which our own hands have built involves any responsibility, but Thoreau was right. The

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comfort he had received from the heat was not his to keep all to himself ; it ought to make his life mean more to others, and he must give account for it.

So we may ask ourselves the question, after receiving any favor or blessing from God, "What did you do when you were blessed?" When we have experienced any pure, sweet joy, we need to put this question to ourselves, "What enrichment of life did you receive from your joy? What new, sweet song did you learn to sing when you were happy? What benedictions of cheer did you pass to others when your heart was glad?"

For one thing, we ought to be better when God has given us joy. The joy should add to the charm and power of our personality, the strength and beauty and depth of our character. If we are not richer-hearted after God has given us some new, sweet gladness, we have failed to receive his gift aright or to get from it what he meant us to get. Whenever we have a day of radiant joy or sweet peace or blessed vision, and are not better therefor, we have

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missed the real object of the blessing which God intended us to get. Our mountain-top days are not merely experiences to be enjoyed by us; the radiance should become part of our life thereafter, and the light should shine from us upon others. The object of living is not merely to be happy ourselves, but to make others happy; not only to have blessings, but to grow into lives of deeper, sweeter blessedness. One writes of a day of rare beauty:

*Into our lives—a rose amid the thorns,
A star in night—there came one perfect day,
Framed all in sunshine, lit with light of love,
And compassed round with blessing ev'ry way.
Hush! let us keep it, sweet,
By God's own grace—complete.*

*Now, though the shadows gather round our path;
Now, though the darkness rise and hide the
light;
Now, though we never reap life's aftermath,
Nor ever touch again so fair a height;
Now, let come what may,
We know one perfect day.*

*Sweet, looking up, we know that pain must rise,
And strife, to mar that day's most perfect
peace;*

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*But, looking farther, in God's light of love
We see the land where all the discords cease;
And where, God grant, we may
Relive that perfect day.*

But besides being enriched ourselves by the blessings that God sends to us, besides getting new faith and hope and joy from the glimpses of heavenly beauty God gives to us along the way, these experiences should fit us to be more largely helpful to others. It goes without saying that our faces should show it. Not many of the people one meets have really joyous faces. Too many show traces of care and discontent. But if we have the joy of Christ in our hearts it ought to shine out. This is one of the ways we may let our light shine before men. We should remember that we are responsible for what our faces say to people. We have no right to show in our features doubt, fear, discontent, unhappiness, fretfulness, bitterness. We are not witnessing worthily for Christ unless we are witnessing in our faces to the joy and blessing of his love. Professor Drummond says: "The machinery

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of the kingdom is very simple and very silent, and the most silent parts do most; and we all believe so little in the medicines of Christ that we do not know what ripples of healing are set in motion when we simply smile on one another."

Thackeray also says that the world is a looking-glass which reflects our looks, whether they be sweet or sour. Joy in our faces, breaking into smiles, starts smiles on other faces. There is many a face which is a blessed evangel because of the love, peace, and joy which illumine it. When we sit for our picture the photographer says, "Now look pleasant." That is well. We cannot get a picture we will care for our friends to see unless we wear a face that is bright, cheerful, and sunny when we are sitting before the camera. Of course we want a pleasant face in a photograph. But we have no right to wear an unhappy or a clouded face anywhere. Wherever we go, if we know the love of Christ, there is a voice bidding us look pleasant. We represent Christ, and Christ's face was always a benediction.

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He never made any one's burden heavier, or any one's heart sadder, by a gloomy face. Our faces should shine with the joy of Christ that is in our hearts.

But the face is not all. The mind of Christ should also inspire in us a personal ministry of kindness. When we have been warmed by our fire of love, we should shed the warmth on others, not only in happy faces, but also in a ministry of thoughtfulness and helpfulness which may bless many. Love is always kind, and nothing is more worth while than kindness. Nothing else does more to brighten the world and sweeten other lives.

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in a letter: "It is the history of our kindnesses that alone makes the world tolerable. If it were not for that, for the effect of kind words, kind looks, kind letters, multiplying, spreading, making one happy through another, and bringing forth benefits, some thirty, some fifty, some a thousandfold, I should be tempted to think our life a practical jest in the worst possible spirit."

Gladdened to Gladden

Kindnesses are the small coins of love. We should always be ready to scatter these bright coins wherever we go. Kindnesses are usually little things that we do as we go along the way.

“ They are little, simple things to do—

*To sweep a room, to bake a loaf of bread,
Kiss a hurt finger, tie a baby’s shoe,
To mend a crying schoolboy’s broken sled.*

“ Such little, simple things! But they above

*Who on our little world attendant wait,
And joyful wait, note only if through love
The deed be done, to count the work as great.”*

We do not know the value of these little acts or their far-reaching influence. In the parable we are told how a mustard seed grew into a tree, amid whose branches the birds perched and sang. It is said that the fuchsia was first introduced into England by a sailor boy, who brought a single plant from some foreign country as a present for his mother. She put it in her modest window, and it became an attraction to all who passed by. From that little plant came all the fuchsias in England. The

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boy did not know when, in loving thought for his mother, he carried home the little plant, what a beautiful thing he was doing, what a ministry of good he was starting, how widely the influence of his simple thought of love would reach. We never know when we do any smallest thing in love for Christ what the end of it will be, what a harvest of good will come from it.

It is a beautiful thing to plant a flower which may grow and be the beginning of a lovely garden which shall brighten one little spot in the desert. That is worth while. It is worth while to put a bit of beauty into a dreary spot to brighten it. It is worth while to plant a few flowers where no flowers had bloomed before. It is a beautiful thing to change a spot of desert into a garden. It is still more worth while to get love into a heart in which only selfishness and hate dwelt before. It is best of all to get Christ admitted where he has not been received before. That is the truest and best ministry.

The Gentleness of Christ

*“ O Spirit of infinite kindness,
And gentleness passing all speech !
Forgive when we miss in our blindness
The comforting Hand thou dost reach.
Thou sendest the Spring on thine errand
To soften the grief of the world ;
For us is the calm of the mountain,
For us is the roseleaf uncurled ! ”*

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

The Gentleness of Christ



ENTLENESS is not weakness. There are men who are gentle—sympathetic, kind, tender, yet who are not strong. But that is not the kind of manliness we admire. The true man is always strong. Tourists sometimes find high up on the Alps, on some bald crag, on the edge of the eternal snows, a sweet, lovely flower growing. That is gentleness—the mighty rock, immovable, unchanging, and on it growing the tender, fragrant bloom. Gentleness is essential to complete manliness, but gentleness is beautiful only when combined with strength.

Christ is gentle in dealing with sufferers. Skill in giving comfort is very rare. Many people are sure to speak the wrong word when they sit down beside those who are in pain or trouble. Job's friends were "miserable comforters."

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They tried to make Job believe that he had displeased God, and that this was why so much evil had come upon him. Many good people think that when they sit beside a sufferer or a mourner, they must talk about the trouble, entering into all its details, and dwelling upon all that makes it painful and hard to endure. But the truest comforter is not the one who seems to sympathize the most deeply, going down into the depths with him who is in grief, but the one who, sympathizing with the sufferer, yet brings cheer and uplift, sets a vision of Christ before the mourning eyes, and sings of peace and hope.

It is thus that Christ deals with pain and sorrow. He does not seek to take away the burden—rather, he would make us brave and strong to bear it. One writes of an invalid lady who had a little locket in which were five dates written in red ink. “Those are the black-letter, not the red-letter, days of my life,” she said to her friend. “The first is the date of mother’s death, and O, how I rebelled, though I was only a girl in my teens. The second,

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three years later, is the date of my father's leaving us, and again I rebelled. The third marks the time of my husband's going, and still I murmured and struggled. The fourth is the date of the taking of my only darling, a sweet little fellow of five, and this time I almost cursed my heavenly Father, for now all my loved ones were gone and I was left alone. All the while I was not a Christian—indeed, I had grown bitter and hard. I thought God was punishing me. Now I see that he was not punishing, but educating me by a strange discipline. But I want you to look at the last date," the woman continued. It read "March 3, 1898." She said, "That was the day I gave my heart to the Saviour. You notice there were twenty-six years between the first date and the last—twenty-six years of fruitless rebellion. It took me twenty-six years to learn to say, 'Thy will be done.' "

This is a beautiful illustration of Christ's gentle way of dealing with those who suffer. The gentleness did not appear, however, at first, because the sufferer did not submit to the Mas-

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ter. While the struggle was continued there was no peace, no joy, no revealing of love. Resistance only made the darkness seem deeper, the trials harder to endure, the cup more bitter. At last the sufferer yielded and crept into the Master's bosom. Then joy came. Who will say the Master was not gentle in all his dealing with that life those six and twenty years?

Christ is very gentle also with those who have sinned and are trying to begin again. He has no tolerance with sin, but is infinitely patient with the sinner. There is a story of an incorrigible soldier who had been punished so often for so many offences, without avail, that his commanding officer despaired of the man's amendment. Again he was under arrest and the officer spoke hopelessly of him, asking what more could be done to save him from his own undoing. A fellow-officer suggested, "Try forgiving him." The man was brought in and asked what he had to say for himself. He replied: "Nothing, except that I'm very sorry." "Well," said the officer, "we have de-

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cided to forgive you.” The man stood dazed for a moment, and then burst into tears, saluted, and went out to become the best and bravest soldier in the command. Gentleness had saved him.

That is the way Christ deals with the penitent. He saves by forgiving. He loves unto the uttermost. His grace is inexhaustible. However often we fail, when we come back and ask to try again, he welcomes us and gives us another chance. This is our hope—if he were not thus gentle with us, we should never get home.

Christ is very gentle with us also in our serving of him. We sometimes hear it said, when the bareness and poverty of certain people's homes are spoken of, that “the one half do not know how the other half live.” That is very true and thinking of this “other half” ought to give those who live in comfort Christly sympathy with those who live in want and poverty. But the same distinction exists among Christians, between those who live in a happy religious environment and those who

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must follow Christ with almost nothing in their condition or circumstances to encourage or help them.

Those with all the refinements and inspirations of the best Christian culture about them have little conception of the disadvantages of others who are following Christ without any of this help, in the face of most uncongenial surroundings. What kind of Christians would we be, and how beautifully would we live, if we were in their circumstances?

In a railroad accident a young fireman stood manfully at his post and was fatally hurt. Everything was done for him that kindness could do. A minister spoke to him of the love of Christ.

"Yes," he gasped, "I do believe in Christ. But God knows I've had to work so hard, such long hours, and have been so tired at night that I have had **no** chance to pray much or to go to church."

His brother stood by and broke in. "But he's been a good boy. He worked night and day

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to support our crippled mother—and me, when I was laid up for a year.”

“Yes, sir, and he took care of me,” said a big baggageman, “when I had smallpox and nobody would come near me.”

“And more than once,” added another young man, “he’s taken my run, after coming in from his own, when I was too sick to go out.”

The poor fireman smiled on his friends—a smile of gratitude. He had never heard much praise.

“God will not keep him out of heaven—will he?” said his brother, tenderly.

The minister bent over the dying boy and said, reverently and with deep feeling: “The peace of God, the peace of Christ, be upon you. You have done what you could.”

Can we doubt the gentleness of Christ in such a case? He is infinitely patient with all whose lot is hard. He never exacts more of us than we can do. He is never unreasonable. He knows when the burdens are too heavy for us. Once he, “being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well” in his exhaustion. He sym-

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pathizes with those who are weary and helps them.

There is a picture which shows a girl at her spinning-wheel. The hour is late—midnight, as a clock in the bare room shows—and the spinner, exhausted by her long toil to earn enough to support her little household, has fallen asleep beside the wheel. And an angel is finishing her work. How gentle our Task-master is! How sweet it is to come to him at the close of the long days and rest at his feet!

*“My heart is tired, so tired to-night,—
How endless seems the strife!
Day after day the restlessness
Of all this weary life!
I come to lay the burden down
That so oppresseth me,
And shutting all the world without,
To spend an hour with thee,
Dear Lord,
To spend an hour with thee.*

*“I would forget a little while
The bitterness of fears,
The anxious thoughts that crowd my life,
The buried hopes of years ;*

The Gentleness of Christ

*Forget that mortals' weary toil
My patient care must be.
A tired child I come to-night,
To spend an hour with thee,
Dear Lord,
One little hour with thee."*

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Would Our Way be Better ?

*“ Being perplexed, I say,
Lord, make it right !
Night is as day to thee,
Darkness as light.
I am afraid to touch things
That involve so much,
My trembling hand may shake,
My skilless hand may break ;
Thine can make no mistake.*

*“ Being in doubt, I say,
Lord, make it plain !
Which is the true, safe way ?
Which would be vain ?
I am not wise to know,
Nor sure of port to go ;
My blind eyes cannot see
What is so plain to thee ;
Lord, make it clear to me.”*

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Would Our Way be Better?



WE often think we could do better if things were in our hands. We think we could direct our affairs so as to get more happiness and greater good out of life. Sometimes it seems to us that many things go wrong and that the consequences to us are very calamitous. It must be confessed that there is in the world a great deal of discontent with the ways of Providence. Not many people seem to be quite satisfied with their circumstances, and there are many who think that the divine dealings with them are not in accordance with that love which they are told directs the affairs of all God's children.

Would it be better if we had the direction of our own affairs? So, sometimes we are tempted to think. If it were permitted to us to do

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this, no doubt there would be a great change in the method of what we now call Providence. We would at once eliminate all that is painful and unpleasant in our lot. We would have only prosperities, with no adversities, only joys, with no sorrows. We would exclude pain from our life and all trouble. The days would all be sunny, with blue skies and no clouds or storms. The paths would all be mossy and strewn with flowers, without thorns or any rough places.

All this has a very pleasing aspect for us when we think of it lightly and in a superficial way. Would not that be better than as we have it now? Would we not be happier, and would not life mean more to us in blessing and good, if we could direct our own affairs, and leave out the painful, the bitter, the adverse, and the sorrowful? So most of us would probably say at first, before we have thought of the question deeply and looked on to the end. But really the greatest misfortune that could come to us in this world would be to have the direction of the affairs and the shaping of

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the experiences of our lives put into our own hands. We have no wisdom to know what is best for ourselves. To-day is not all of life—there is a long future, perhaps many years in this world, and then immortality hereafter. What would give us greatest pleasure to-day might work us harm in days to come. Present gratification might cost us untold loss and hurt in the future.

Our wants and our real needs are not always the same. We want pleasure, plenty, prosperity—perhaps we need pain, self-denial, the giving up of things that we greatly prize. We shrink from suffering, from sacrifice, from struggle—perhaps these are the very experiences which will do the most for us, which will bring out in us the best possibilities of our natures, which will fit us for the largest service to God and man.

We should always remember that the object of living here is not merely to have present comfort, to get along with the least trouble, to gather the most we can of the world's treasures, to win the brightest fame. We are here

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to grow into the beauty of Christ and to do the portion of God's will that belongs to us. We cannot therefore work out our own course, for we do not know what the divine purpose for us is. We cannot choose our own circumstances and experiences, for we do not know the pattern set for our lives.

There is something wonderfully inspiring in the thought that God has a plan and a purpose for our lives, for each life. We do not come drifting into this world and do not drift through it like waifs on the ocean. We are sent from God, each one of us with a divine thought for his life—something God wants us to do, some place he wants us to fill. All through our lives we are in the hands of God, who chooses our place and orders our circumstances and is ready to make all things work together for our good. Our part in all this is the acceptance of God's will for our lives as that will is made known to us day by day. If we thus acquiesce in the divine way for us we shall fulfil the divine purpose.

It is the highest honor that could be conferred

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upon us to occupy such a place in the thought of God. We cannot doubt that his way for us is better than ours, since he is infinitely wiser than we are, and loves us so. It may be painful and hard, but in the pain and the hardness there is blessing.

One is called apart from active life and shut up in a sick-room. It seems to him that his time is being wasted. There are many things that need to be done and which he might have done while lying there with folded hands in his darkened room. People to whom his life is a continual blessing miss him when he comes not. He seems in his illness to be leaving a great blank where there ought to have been many good deeds and gentle ministries. Besides this loss to others and to the work of the world, sickness is most costly to the sick man himself. Its money cost is great. Then its burden of suffering is great.

What is there to compensate for all this loss and cost and to make the long illness really a blessing? Is there anything? If we were directing the affairs of our own lives we would

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not put the sickness in ; is it possible that God's way is better than ours would have been?

Of course we may not claim to know all the reasons there are in the divine mind for the pains and sufferings that come into our lives, or what God's design for us in these trials is. Without discovering any reasons at all, however, we may still trust God, who loves us with an infinite love and whose wisdom also is infinite. But we can think of some ways in which it is possible for blessing and good to come out of a sick-room experience.

The Master has other work for us besides what we do in our common occupations. We have other lessons to learn besides those we get from books and friends and current events, and through life's ordinary experiences. There is a work to be done in us, in our own hearts and lives, which is even more important than anything assigned to us in the scheme of the world's activities. There are lessons which we can learn much better in the quiet, shaded sick-room than outside, in the glare of the streets and amid the clamor of earth's strifes.

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Our shut-in days need never be lost days. Whatever they may cost us in money or in suffering, we need not be poorer when they are over than if we had been busy all the while at the world's tasks.

Or take sorrow. We would not have it in our plan if we shaped our own lives. It seems only calamitous. It takes away our brightest joys and breaks our sweetest happiness. Can we think of any way in which the work of sorrow may leave us better or richer than if it had not come to us? We know well that there are blessings we never can reach unless we are willing to pass to them through pain and grief. To-day it may seem that it would be better if we could miss life's sorrows and have only joys; but when we get home we shall see that the best days of all our years have been the days we thought the saddest and found it the hardest to pass through. Some time we shall know that God has made no mistake in anything he has done for us, however he may have broken into our plans and spoiled our pleasant dreams.

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It would not be better if we could have our own way. When we thought we were choosing wisely, we should find we had lost a heavenly good for some trinket of earth which we could keep only for a day. When we thought the path we were taking would lead to lasting good, we should discover that it ended only in darkness and sorrow. It should be reason for measureless gratitude that our lives are not in our own poor feeble hands, but in the hands of our Father.

*“ I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the world go right,
But only to discover and to do,
With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints.
I will trust in him,
That he can hold his own ; and I will take
His will, above the work he sendeth me,
To be my chiefest good.”*

We need only to accept God's way and go as he leads, and at the end we shall find that in not the smallest matter have we ever been unwisely led but that at every step we have been brought to some good. We do not know what

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the future, even the nearest hour of the future, may have for us, but we know that we cannot drift beyond our Father's love and care, and that all that may seem dark or disastrous will reveal joy and blessing at the end.

Yesterday, when I said, "Thy will be done,"

*I knew not what that will of thine would be,
What clouds would gather black across my sun,
What storm and desolation waited me ;
I knew thy love would give me what was best,
And I am glad I could not know the rest.*

"Thy will be done," I say, and to the scroll

*Of unread years consenting set my name ;
Day after day their pages will unroll
In shining words that prove thy love the same,
Until my years are gathered into one
Eternal, sanctified,
"Thy will be done."*

In the Father's Hands

*The great round world is full of things,
Not only armies and realms and kings,
And lands and seas, and forests tall,
But little things so small to see,
So many that they cannot counted be,
Yet, wonderful thought, the Lord knows all.*

*Oh, wonderful thought, that he can know all,
Not only the mighty but the small ;
Not only the Alp but each flake of its snows !
And he pities and pardons, and loves so well,
That you and I in the thought may dwell,
And not be afraid, though we know he knows.*

—SUSAN COOLIDGE.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

In the Father's Hands



HERE is infinite comfort in the truth of the divine Fatherhood. The name Father carries in it a whole theology of joy and peace. If we accept it as a true revealing of the heart of God, we need not go farther in our quest after a definition of the divine Being, and an explanation of his relation to us and his interest in us. If he is indeed our Father, that is all we need to know. We require no proof that God loves us—if he is our Father that suffices. We need not ask for reasons when he seems to be dealing strangely with us—whatever the form of the providences may be, we know that love is the guiding principle and the great motive of all that he does. If he is our Father we do not need to be disturbed by life's events, however

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they may break into our plans and seem to work us hurt.

It was Jesus Christ who revealed this truth of the divine Fatherhood. If he had taught the world nothing else, this alone would have made him the most wonderful Teacher that ever spoke from God to man. When he taught us to say "Our Father," he brought God down close to us and opened the way for us to his heart of infinite love.

Life has its strange experiences for all of us some time. There come days when human reason can find nothing beautiful or good in what we are passing through. Everything seems destructive. We can see no love in the dark enigma. In such hours it gives us unmeasurable comfort to be able to say: "It is my Father, and he loves me and is making no mistake." It was this confidence that sustained Christ himself in his darkest moments on the cross. In the inexplicable mystery of his suffering, when he could not see the face of his Father and felt as if he were even forsaken by him, his faith found assurance in what he knew of

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the divine love. It was still "My God, my God." The anchor held, and in a few moments more it was light again, and he said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

The Master gives us the lesson for ourselves when he assures us that his Father has in his hands the care of our lives. "My Father is the husbandman," he said to his disciples. The husbandman has entire charge of the vines. He understands them and knows how to care for them. He plants them where they will grow the best, looks after their culture, prunes them, and does for them whatever needs to be done. They are not left to grow without intelligent care.

When Jesus said "My Father is the husbandman," he meant to tell his disciples that the care of their lives is in the hands of God, whose name is love. It is not intrusted to a being of only limited intelligence and only finite power and love. Still less is it chance that directs the events and shapes the circumstances of our days. That is what Atheism would have us

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believe. "There is no God," it says to us. "Things happen. There is no one at the centre of all things who thinks about you. There is no hand but the iron hand of law working in human affairs. There is no love, no heart, anywhere in the vast spaces, feeling, caring; no mind, planning good. The great machine of the universe grinds on, with resistless, relentless power, and what comes into your life comes as the result of this inflexible, undirected, loveless grinding."

There is small comfort in this teaching. It never can give confidence and peace to any heart in the time of trouble. It suggests no comfort when all things appear to be against us.

But that is not what Jesus Christ teaches. The theory of the universe which he gives us is that this is our Father's world. Not only did he create it, adorning it with beauty and fitting it to be the home of his children, but he cares for it with constant, tender care. He has not left the world he made to get along as best it may without any thought from him. Re-

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ferring to the affairs of providence, Jesus says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." There is no chance—all things are under control of intelligence and love. The universe is no mere loveless machine which grinds out our destiny for us. There is a great Heart of everlasting love at the centre of all things. We have nothing to do with the vast machinery—it is ours only to do God's will and fill our little place.

We are not required to make all things work out for good. We do not have to bring about the beneficent results. Our part is simply to learn what God's will for us is, what our duty is, and then do that with cheerful heart. This is our Father's world, and if we do our own little part faithfully and well, we need give no thought to the outcome.

"My Father is the husbandman." That is, when we are taken up and transplanted, it is the Father who does it. When the pruning-knife cuts away beautiful things that we so much wanted to keep, the Father does it. It is not chance that sometimes uproots our life

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so ruthlessly. Nor is it cruelty that brings suffering and pain to us. "How can I believe that God loves me, while he is afflicting me so?" people sometimes say. The answer to the question is, "My Father is the husband-man."

In one of Ralph Connor's books* he tells the story of Gwen, a wild, undisciplined girl, who had been brought up in the free ranch life of the far West. She was motherless. She was unable to read, and knew nothing of God. She had an imperious will which brooked no restraint. By a terrible accident she was lamed for life. The missionary among the cowboys had visited her before her accident and had made a little opening into her heart for God. After the accident he visited her again. Very gently he answered her questions and led her on until she saw that God had allowed her to be hurt, because he loved her and wanted to do her good.

The story of Gwen's canyon is a fine parable

* The Sky Pilot. By Ralph Connor. The Fleming H. Revell Company, N. Y.

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of spiritual teaching. Gwen loved this canyon and called it her canyon—the great, deep, wild gorge which she knew so well, so glorious with its life. The minister said to her, in his parable, that at first there were no canyons—only broad, open prairie. The master of the prairie missed his favorite flowers, which would not grow on the wind-swept plain. Then he called for the lightning and the prairie was cleft to its heart and groaned in agony over its great, gaping wound. But a stream ran through the cleft and carried down black mould, and the birds brought seeds and strewed them in the gorge. By and by the rough rocks were decked out with soft mosses and trailing vines, and all the nooks were hung with clematis and columbine, and everywhere the violets and wind-flower and maiden-hair grew and bloomed until the canyon became the master's place for rest and peace and joy.

With this parable the minister taught his lesson. Gwen's canyon was a parable of Gwen's life. The rending of the level prairie by the terrific lightning seemed to be the utter ruin

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of the land. The great, unsightly cleft, with its dark chasm and bare, jagged rocks, gave small promise of anything lovely. But in the end the yawning gorge became a place of marvellous beauty. It was the same with the girl's life. With magnificent powers there was only untamable wilfulness. She would yield to neither God nor man. The lovely flowers of the Spirit would not grow in her life. Then came the terrible accident which crushed her and broke her strength and shut her away from all activity. Then the Master came, and good seeds were sown in the clefts, and the dark canyon bloomed with the flowers of the Spirit.

We should never forget, when we are called to suffer, that it is always in love our Father causes us pain. The name Father is the key to the meaning of the discipline. We may not understand—we need not understand. It is enough that it is our Father who has the care of our lives.

We should remember, too, that there are blessings which can come to us only in sorrow, les-

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sons which can be learned only in pain and suffering. Even of Jesus it is said that he was made perfect through suffering. There were qualities in him which could not reach their best save in the school of pain. There are in all of us possibilities of spiritual loveliness and strength and love and helpfulness which never can come to their highest development save in suffering. If we cannot endure suffering we cannot grow to our best. A gentleman said: "When my new gardener came to me he said he would have nothing to do with these vines unless he could cut them down clean to the stalk; and we had no grapes for two years. But this is the result," pointing to great clusters of luscious grapes weighing down the vines.

This is a parable of Christian life. It is not required that we shall pray to be permitted to suffer. But we may pray to reach the highest possibilities of Christlikeness and the largest measure of usefulness of which we are capable. Then when we find ourselves face to face with pain or suffering which we must ac-

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cept if our prayer is to be answered, we must not shrink from the experience. It is thus, alone, in suffering, that we can be made perfect.

*“ Only upon some cross of pain or woe
God’s son may lie ;
Each soul redeemed from self and sin must know
Its Calvary.*

*“ Yet we must crave neither for joy or grief—
God chooses best ;
He only knows our sick soul’s best relief
And gives us rest.”*

Evening, Morning, One Day

*“Is not this day enough for all our powers
If its exactions were but fully met,
If not one unpaid debt
Were left to haunt the peace of future hours,
And sting us with regret?”*

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

Evening, Morning, One Day



ONE of the secrets of happy and beautiful life is, to live one day at a time. If we would learn it, it would save us from the worry that in so many people spoils the days, and would add immeasurably to the value of the work we do. For, really, we never have anything to do any day but the bit of God's will for that day. If we do that well we have absolutely nothing else to do.

Time is given to us in days. It was so from the beginning. We need not puzzle ourselves trying to understand just what the "day" was in which God wrought in creating the universe—we may leave this matter to the scientific men and the theologians; but it is interesting to know that each day had its particular apportionment in the stupendous work. At the

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end of each of the creative periods we read, "There was evening and there was morning, one day." So it has been ever since. Time is measured to us by days. Each day has its particular section of duty, something that belongs in between sunrise and sunset, that cannot be done at all if it is not done in its own hours. "There was evening and there was morning, one day, a second day, a third day." This breaking up of time into little daily portions means a great deal more than we are wont to think. For one thing, it illustrates the gentleness and goodness of God. It would have made life intolerably burdensome if a year, instead of a day, had been the unit of division. It would have been hard to carry a heavy load, to endure a great sorrow, or to keep on at a hard duty, for such a long stretch of time. How dreary our common task-work would be if there were no breaks in it, if we had to keep our hand to the plough or our foot on the treadle for a whole year! We never could go on with our struggles, our battles, our suffering, if night did not mercifully settle

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down with its darkness and bid us rest and renew our strength.

We do not understand how great a mercy there is for us in the briefness of our short days. If they were even twice as long as they are, life would be intolerable. Many a time when the sun goes down, we feel that we could scarcely have gone another step. We should have fainted in defeat if the summons to rest had not come just when it did.

Night with its darkness seems to be a blot on the whiteness of day. It seems to fall across our path as an interruption to our activity, compelling us to lay down our work when we are in the very midst of it, leaving it only half done. It seems to be a waster of precious time, eating up half the hours. How much more we could accomplish, we sometimes say, if the sun did not go down, if we could go on without pause! Night throws its heavy veil over the lovely things of this world, hiding them from our view. Yet night really is no stain on the splendor of day, no thief of time, no waster of golden hours, no obscurer of beauty.

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It reveals as much beauty as it hides, for no sooner has the sun set, leaving earth's splendor of landscape, garden, and forest in gloom, than there bursts upon our vision the other splendor of the sky filled with glorious stars.

A noble sonnet by Blanco White relates the experience of our first parent as he watched the sinking of the sun to his setting at the close of his first day :

*Did he not tremble for this lovely frame—
This glorious canopy of light and blue ?
Yet, 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,
And lo ! creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay con-
cealed
Within thy beams, O sun ! or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind !*

When the privilege of work is interrupted, God has another blessing—the blessing of sleep. One may figure out with mathematical certitude that it is a waste of time to spend

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one-third of each day in the idleness of sleep. But these hours, which seem to be lost, in which we appear to be doing nothing, bring us new gifts from God. An old version renders the Psalm verse, "He giveth his beloved in sleep." We lie down with our vitality exhausted in the toils and struggles of the day. Then, while we sleep, God comes to us in the silence and stillness, and refills the emptied fountains. It is really a new creation that takes place in us while we sleep, a miracle of renewal and restoration. We die, as it were, and are made to live again.

Thus we get hints of the graciousness of the divine thoughtfulness in giving us time in periods of little days, which we can easily get through with, and not in great years, in which we would faint and fall by the way. It makes it possible for us to go on through all the long years and not to be overwrought, for we never have given to us at any one time more than we can do between the morning and the evening. George Klinge puts it well:

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*God broke our years to hours and days,
That hour by hour, and day by day,
Just going on a little way,
We might be able all along to keep quite strong.
Should all the weight of life
Be laid across our shoulders, and the future rife
With woe and struggle, meet us face to face
At just one place,
We could not go ;
Our feet would stop ; and so
God lays a little on us every day,
And never, I believe, on all the way
Will burdens bear so deep,
Or pathways lie so threatening and so steep,
But we can go, if by God's power
We only bear the burden of the hour.*

Not only are the days short, so that we can go on to eventide with our work or our burden, but they are separated as by an impassable wall, so that there can be no overflowing of one day's care or responsibility into another. Night drops down its dark curtain between the days, so that we cannot see to-day anything that is in to-morrow. Our Lord taught us that we sin if we let ourselves try to carry the load of any day but this one little day.

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“Be not anxious for to-morrow,” he said, “for to-morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” If we allow ourselves to borrow anxiety from to-morrow, we shall find that we have a greater load than we can carry.

Canon Wilberforce interprets the lesson well:

Lord, for to-morrow and its needs,

I do not pray ;

Keep me, my God, from stain of sin

Just for to-day.

Let me both diligently work,

And duly pray ;

Let me be kind in word and deed

Just for to-day.

Let me be slow to urge my will,

Prompt to obey ;

Help me to mortify my flesh

Just for to-day.

Let me no wrong or idle word

Unthinking say ;

Set thou a seal upon my lips

Just for to-day.

Lo, for to-morrow and its needs

I do not pray,

But keep me, guide me, love me, Lord,

Just for to-day.

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The only true way to live, therefore, is one day at a time. This means that we should give all our strength to the work of the present day, that we should finish each day's tasks by nightfall, leaving nothing undone at setting of sun that we ought to have done. Then, when a new morning dawns we should accept its duties, the bit of God's will it unrolls for us, and do everything well that is given us to do. We may be sure, too, that there is something for each moment, and that if we waste any portion of our day we cannot make it complete. We should bring all the energy and all the skill of mind and heart and hand to our duty as we take it up, doing nothing carelessly or negligently. Then we can lay our day back into God's hand at nightfall with confidence, saying, "Father, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do to-day."

But we should never be anxious about either yesterday or to-morrow. Yesterday is gone, and we never can get it back to change anything in it. It is idle, therefore, to waste a moment of time or a particle of strength fret-

Evening, Morning, One Day

ting over it. To-morrow is not yet ours, and we cannot touch its life until it becomes our to-day. God means us to put our undivided energy into the doing of the present day's work. If we do this we shall have quite enough to do to fill all the hours and to engage our best energy and skill and strength.

In this way, too, we shall best prepare for to-morrow. One day's duty slighted or neglected prepares confusion and overburdening for the next. The days are all woven together in God's plan, each one following the day before and fitting into the day coming after it. Each takes up the work which the day before brought to its feet, and carries it forward to deliver it to the one which waits. A marred or empty day anywhere spoils the web, losing the thread.

If we learn well the lesson of living just one day at a time, without anxiety for either yesterday or to-morrow, we shall have found one of the great secrets of Christian peace. That is the way God teaches us to live. That is the lesson both of the Bible and of nature. If we

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learn it, it will cure us of all anxiety; it will save us from all feverish haste; it will enable us to live sweetly in any experience.

*“ One day at a time! That's all it can be :
No faster than that is the hardest fate ;
And days have their limits, however we
Begin them too early and stretch them late.”*

True Friendship's Wishes

*“ As we meet and touch each day
The many travellers on our way,
Let every such brief contact be
A glorious, helpful ministry,—
The contact of the soil and seed,
Each giving to the other’s need,
Each helping on the other’s best,
And blessing, each, as well as blest.”*

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

True Friendship's Wishes



SAINT PAUL has given us many lessons in friendship. He himself had a genius for friendship, and no one can study him in his relation to his friends without finding much that is beautiful enough to be followed. In one of his epistles, for example, he reveals the nature of his wishes for his friends in a very striking sentence. He writes that he longs to see them, that he may impart unto them some spiritual gift.

One suggestion from the character of this longing is that the truest Christian friendship desires, not to receive, but to give. Saint Paul wished to see his friends, not to be refreshed, encouraged, and strengthened himself, by their love, but that he might impart gifts of enriching to them. Always the attitude of true friendship is the same—the longing to do

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something for our friend, to be of use to him, to be of help to him, rather than the desire to get something from him, to be helped by him. This is put well in Dr. Babcock's little morning prayer :

*O Lord, I pray
That for this day
I may not swerve
By foot or hand
From thy command,
Not to be served, but to serve.*

*This too I pray
That for this day
No love of ease
Nor pride prevent
My good intent,
Not to be pleased, but to please.*

*And if I may,
I'd have this day
Strength from above,
To set my heart
In heavenly art,
Not to be loved, but to love.*

Another suggestion from Saint Paul's longing is that the very heart of true Christian

True Friendship's Wishes

friendship is helpfulness. We begin to be like Christ only when we begin to desire to do others good. The world's ideal is, "Every man for himself," but Christ set a new standard for his followers. We are to look upon everyone we meet with the question in our hearts, "What can I do for this man? How can I serve him? In what way can I do him good, help him, comfort him, strengthen him?" We are always to hold ourselves ready to show the kindness of love to every human being that crosses our path. He may not need us—but then he may,—and if he does we must not fail to give him the help he needs.

We do not know how many of those whom we meet any day do need us. There may be none of the great crying needs which kindle compassion in all human breasts. We may go for years and come upon no one lying wounded by the wayside. But there are needs just as real as these, and perhaps quite as tragic. There are hearts that are discouraged, needing cheer, that they faint not. There are people who are tempted, wavering, and ready to fall.

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There are those who are carrying a burden of sorrow, crying out for comfort. There are those who are hungry for love.

There always are opportunities for helping, and the world needs nothing more than men and women who are ready to respond to each call for love's gentle ministry. A pleasant story is told of Wendell Phillips, the great orator. He was passionately devoted to his invalid wife. One night after he had delivered a lecture in a suburban town, his friends urged him not to return home till morning. "The last train has gone," they said, "and you will have to go in a carriage. It will mean twelve miles of cold riding through rain and sleet."

"Ah, yes," he replied, cheerily, "but at the end of the ride I shall see Annie Phillips."

Christianity exalts every good thing of life and nothing more than its friendships. The ministry to which our Master calls every one of us is a ministry of personal helpfulness. It is not always easy. It may mean utter forgetfulness of self. But the lower its condescension, the diviner it is.

True Friendship's Wishes

There is a beautiful story of the boyhood of Agassiz. The family lived in Switzerland. One day Louis and a younger brother were crossing a lake near their home, and came to a crack in the ice which the smaller boy could not leap over. The older one then laid himself down across the crack, making a bridge of his body, and his brother climbed over on him. There is need all the while for human bridges over gaps and yawning crevices, and let no one say that this is asking too much even of love. We remember that the Master said he was a way, a bridge, that he laid his precious life across the great impassable chasm between sin and heaven, that men might walk over on him, from death to life. If it was fit that the Master should make of himself such a bridge, can any service we may be called to do in helping others be too costly, too humbling?

The new friendship in which the Master leads us is known by its ministry of helpfulness. Selfishness is always most undivine. The love that heaven inspires serves, and serves unto the uttermost. Christ himself had no other errand

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to this world but to help people. He did it in the largest way in giving his life. He did it continually in countless little and great ways along his years. We should go out every morning with a longing like this in our hearts :

“ *What can I do to-day ?
Not gold, or ease, or power, or love, to gain,
Or pleasure gay ;
But to impart
Joy to some stricken heart ;
To send some heaven-born rays
Of hope, some sad, despairing
Soul to cheer ;
To lift some weighing doubts ;
Make truth more clear ;
Dispel some dawning fear ;
To lull some pain ;
Bring to the fold again
Some lamb astray ;
To brighten life for someone.
Now and here
This let me do to-day.* ”

Saint Paul's longing suggests also that we should seek to help our friends in the best and highest ways. He wished to impart to them some spiritual gift. There are many things

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we can do for others. We may help them in temporal ways. If they are poor, we may pay their rent, or provide fuel for their fires or bread for their hunger. But there are better things than these which we can do. No doubt sometimes a loaf of bread is better than a tract or even a gospel; or, rather, the loaf must go first to prepare the way for the tract and the gospel. Whatever we do first, however, for a friend or a neighbor, we must not be content until we have sought to impart to him some spiritual gift, some heavenly blessing.

Is it this higher thought of friendship that most of us put into our conception of what belongs to the mission of friendship? We should not forget that if we are Christians we represent Christ in this world. He would reach other lives through us. He would pour his grace into other hearts through our hearts. In all this world there is no other privilege more sacred than that of being a friend to another person. When God sends us to someone in this holy way, we should lift up our hearts

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in reverent and grateful recognition of the honor conferred upon us. We should think also of the responsibility which this trust puts upon us. We stand in Christ's place to the life that looks to us in love and confidence and waits for the help we are to bring, the comfort we are to minister, the blessing we are to impart. One speaks thus to a friend whom God had sent :

*“ God never loved me in so sweet a way before ;
'Tis he alone who can such blessings send ;
And when his love would new expression find,
He brought thee to me, and said, ‘ Behold a
friend ! ’ ”*

But if you are the friend thus sent from God to another, think what it will mean to fill the sacred place. What are you going to be as a friend to the one who looks to you with hungry heart for strength, for encouragement, for inspiration, for help? What have you to give that will make the life richer? What touches of beauty are you going to put upon the soul that is nestling in the shadow of your friendship?

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It is very sure that merely worldly ease and comfort are not the best things we can seek for our friends. It is natural that we should want to shield them from hardship, burden-bearing, and sorrow. But in the very tenderness of our love we may rob them of the best possibilities of their lives. When God would bless us most largely in a spiritual way, he does not ordinarily give us all ease and luxury. He knows that the room must be darkened sometimes if we are to learn to sing the new, sweet song, and that before we will accept heavenly good things it may be necessary that our hands shall be emptied of absorbing earthly things. One of the first duties of friendship is prayer. Perhaps most of us do pray for those we love when they are sick or in great trouble. But what do we ask for them then? Probably we pray that they may recover from their sickness or be comforted in their trouble. But are these love's best intercessions? When our friends are sick, it is right for us to pray that they may get well, but that should not be our only request for them. The sickness has

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a mission—something it was sent to do in them and for them. It would be a great misfortune, therefore, if they should recover from their illness, and get out into the busy world again, and miss receiving the blessing which the illness was commissioned to bear to them. While then we pray for the curing of our friends, that they may return to their duties, we should also ask that the will of God in their sickness may be done in them.

Then if we pray for our friends who are in sorrow, what should we ask for them? The sorrow also comes as God's messenger, bringing gifts of love. The best blessings of life lie beyond experiences of pain, and we cannot get the blessings without passing through the experiences. We should plead that our friends may not miss receiving the gifts which the messenger, sorrow, holds in his hands for them. It would be very sad if pain or grief should come into a life and pass, leaving no blessing, no enriching.

But not only when they are sick or in sorrow should we pray for our friends,—they proba-

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bly need our prayers far more when they are in health and joy and prosperity. "When you see me growing rich," wrote a good man to a friend, "pray for my soul." We may all say to those who love us and watch over our lives, "When I am very happy and very prosperous, and when all things are bringing me joy, pray for me." So we should never fail to pray for our friends, to beseech of God the best things for their lives. Their greatest danger is not sickness, nor bereavement, nor loss of money, nor pain, but—lest they forget God.

Thus should we exalt the aims of our friendships. It is not enough to seek to give pleasure to those we love, to make them happier; we should endeavor also to impart to them enduring good. And not only to our personal friends should we seek thus to do good, but to all whose lives we touch. Every one who meets us should be the better for it, taking from us some inspiration,

*" One bit of courage
For the darkening sky, one gleam of faith*

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*To brave the thickening ills of life,
One glimpse of brighter skies beyond the gathering
mist,
To make this life more worth while,
And heaven a surer heritage."*

We are debtors to all men—we owe love and love's service to everyone. God sends us to carry blessing to each person we meet. It may be a lowly one who stands before us to-morrow, one who is unworthy, one who has sinned; it may be an enemy, one who yesterday wronged us, spoke bitter things of us, tried to injure us. No matter. We are sent from God with something for this very person, whoever or whatever he may be. The love of Christ in us says to this man, "I long to impart unto you some spiritual gift," and we dare not refuse this ministry of love to any being under heaven. Then we do not know how sorely he needs us, how hungry he is for love, in how great peril he is this very moment—sent to us perhaps as a refuge, that we may be the bosom of Christ to him, that he may be saved by a word, a look, a kindness, a prayer, of ours.

Christ in Our Everyday

*“ Not mine high place and power ;
But humble task,
And duty done each hour,
Is all I ask.*

*“ To be myself so strong
I shall not need
To do another wrong
By word or deed.*

*“ To know the quiet heart,
The happy mind,
That come to one whose part
Is to be kind.”*

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

Christ in Our Everyday



SOME people seem to miss altogether the thought of bringing Christ into their common, everyday life. When a Christian young man was talking about what calling he would choose, expressing much uncertainty and perplexity on the subject, he was asked if he had prayed about it. He was astonished and said he could not think of troubling the Lord with such a matter as that. There are many good people who have the same thought. They suppose that God is interested only in their spiritual affairs and not in their secular matters.

But that is not the true thought of God's care for us. He is interested in everything that concerns us. There is nothing in all the range of our life which we may not bring to him. There are none of our affairs in which religion

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does not have its place. We may make the most common things of business as beautiful and as holy as a prayer.

There is a story of an artist in the olden days, who was falsely charged with crime and cast into prison. He was allowed to have his paints and brushes, but no canvas or paper, nothing on which he might paint. One day a man came to the artist's cell-door and said to him, "I wish you would paint me a picture." "I would," replied the artist, "if I had anything on which to paint it." The visitor looked about him, and on the floor of the prison corridor he found an old soiled napkin. "Paint it on this," he said, as he passed the napkin into the cell. The artist began at once, and continued his work until the picture was finished. It was a picture of the Christ, a marvellously beautiful one, which afterward found a place in one of the old cathedrals. Thus the soiled common napkin was redeemed from destruction and dishonor, and consecrated to highest honor and sacredness.

There is nothing in all our life, however lowly

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and commonplace, however prosaic and secular, on which we may not put the name of Christ, something of the beauty of Christ. There are not two departments in life—one religious and one with which religion has nothing to do. The Sabbath is meant to bring us more consciously into the divine presence than the other days, that we may worship God, look into his face, and get fresh cheer and strength; but we are in God's presence as really on Monday and Tuesday as on Sunday, and we should do the work of the week just as religiously as we do our praying and Bible reading. Our business should be as devout as our worship. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

To do things in the name of Christ means, for one thing, to do them in Christ's way. The commandments are for week-day life—we are to obey them always. They are as binding when we are buying and selling, when we are at our daily task-work, when we are seeking pleasure or recreation, as when we are engaged in some specifically religious duty. There is

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no true success which is not found in the way of obedience to the divine law. To disregard the commandments in anything is to write anathema over it. Some men, indeed, seem to ignore God's law and to climb up some other way, scaling even to giddy heights. They make a great show of prosperity, but it is an empty show, which lasts, at the longest, only through the earthly life and then vanishes, falls to nothing. They who take God's way are the only ones who really attain success. God's saints are those who do God's will in life's common days.

Sometimes people think that it is utterly impossible for them to live a saintly life where their lot is cast. They say it is easy for the minister to be a holy man, for he is engaged all the time in sacred duties. Or they think of some deaconess or of a woman set apart in a peculiar devotement of some kind to Christian work, and say that it is easy for her to be good and to keep always near to Christ. But with themselves it is altogether different. Their time must all be spent in secular work, at some

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trade or in household tasks. If they were employed all the time in religious duties, it would be easy for them to be saintly too.

But we may do the most common, prosaic things in the name of Christ, and this brings the lowliest occupation as near to Christ as that of the minister or the deaconess. Jesus was just as holy in his life and lived just as near to God the first thirty years when he was a carpenter as the last three years when he was engaged in the great work of his Messiahship. We may live as saintly lives in the lowliest trade or calling as in the most sacred of callings.

*“ The sainthoods of the firesides
And of the market-place,—
They wear no shining halo,
No glory-lighted face.*

*“ Each day they do the duty
The passing hour doth bring,
Still looking unto Jesus,
Their chosen Lord and King.”*

Doing anything in the name of Christ is also doing it for him. We are acting for him, and it is the same as if he himself had done it.

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What a hallowing of our lives there would be if we always remembered that we are here thus in Christ's name, to do what he would do if he were where we are, doing the things that are set for us to do! What a splendor there would be in even the lowliest tasks, if we consciously lived in this way! How dull, commonplace duties would be transformed! How glad we should be to do the most lowly things! Then how well we would do everything! There would be no skimping of our work, no slighting of it, no half-doing of it. No duty would seem unworthy of us, too small or too menial for us. Browning tells of an angel who took a boy's place at a lowly task while the boy in his discontent was away from it, and did it year after year as cheerfully, as joyfully, as patiently, and as well as if it had been the highest service of heaven. If only we could always keep in mind that we are working in the name of Christ, we should never find any task irksome nor any duty hard.

If we really know the name of Christ as we may know it, all life would be changed for us.

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In Henry van Dyke's beautiful story—"The Lost Word"—we are told how Hermas, who had become a follower of Christ, was tempted to part with the one word which was the key to all the treasures of life and hope. In return for this word thus parted with he got riches, pleasure, and power. But he went through life unable any more to find the lost word. In time of need or sorrow or peril he would begin to recall the comfort, the hope, the joy, he had once known, but all was blank. "Where was the word—the word that he had been used to utter night and morning, the word that had meant to him more than he had ever known? What had become of it?" But he could not find it. Someone had taken it away. At last the day came when the terrible bargain was annulled and Hermas was restored to peace. He found again the word the loss of which had left him in such darkness. It was given back to him. It was this sweet, precious, blessed Name.

If we know this Name, it is the key to all that is beautiful, true, and eternal. No burden

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would seem heavy if we bore it in Christ's name and for him. No cross would be too hard to carry if this Name were written on it. No work would seem hard if we were doing it consciously for our Master. If we remembered him, and saw his eyes of love looking down upon us continually, we could not let the hateful mood stay in our hearts, we could not do the mean or wicked thing, we could not say the bitter, cutting word, we could not, by our wretched jealousy, hurt the gentle heart that never had given us anything but love. Then this little prayer would be our daily morning prayer :

*“ Grant us, O Lord, the grace to bear
The little prickling thorn ;
The hasty word that seems unfair ;
The twang of truths well worn ;
The jest which makes our weakness plain ;
The darling plan o’erturned ;
The careless touch upon our pain ;
The slight we have not earned ;
The rasp of care, dear Lord, to-day.
Lest all these fretting things
Make needless grief, oh give, we pray,
The heart that trusts and sings.”*

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This name of Christ tests all life for us. Anything over which we cannot write this blessed name is unfit for us to do. What we cannot do in this name we ought not to do at all. The friendship on which we cannot put “in the name of Jesus” is not a friendship we should take into our life. The business we cannot conduct in Christ’s name we would better not try to conduct at all. The gate over which this Name is not carved we should not enter.

In Tune with God

*There was never a song that was sung by thee,
But a sweeter one was meant to be.*

*There was never a deed that was grandly done,
But a greater was meant by some earnest one.*

*For the sweetest voice can never impart
The song that trembles within the heart.*

*And the brain and hand can never quite do
The thing that the soul has fondly in view.*

*And hence are the tears and the burden of pain,
For the shining goals are never to gain.*

*And the real song is ne'er heard by man,
Nor the work ever done for which we plan.*

*But enough that a God can hear and see
The song and the deed that were meant to be.*

BENJAMIN R. BULKELEY.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

In Tune with God



N music everything depends on tune. It is so also in living. Many people are like instruments out of tune, sometimes badly out of tune. There is no sweet-

ness in their lives. The chords of their being are jangled. The object of Christian culture is to bring our lives into perfect tune, so that they will give forth sweet music. The standard key to which all lives are to be tuned is the life of God himself. This attunement is the work of the whole life—it takes all our earthly years to come into perfect accord with the music of heaven.

Some people do not like theological terms. Such terms suggest to them abstruse doctrines which are not easily understood. One of these disliked words is “atonement.” There are wide differences of opinion concerning its

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meaning. Many ecclesiastical battles have been waged round this word. We need not linger now to discuss meanings or wage over again old controversies. Yet there is a beautiful meaning in the word in which all may agree. It means attunement—the bringing of two persons, hitherto at variance, into cordial and kindly relations. The theological meaning is the reconciling of God and man, the bringing of them together in love and friendship—that is, the bringing of men into harmony and fellowship with God. God always loves us, but we have to learn to love him. That is what religion is intended to do in us—to lift us into harmony with God. It takes our discordant lives and brings them into tune with the holy life of Christ who was the revealing of God.

Before we can receive the blessings of the heavenly life, our hearts must be made ready, must be in tune with God himself. In wireless telegraphy, the receiver must be perfectly attuned to its transmitter, or it will not get the message. Little waves of ether are set in mo-

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tion and ripple out in all directions, as when a pebble is dropped into a quiet bay and starts wavelets which widen out and roll on till they have touched every shore. There may be a thousand stations, with their wires and electrical apparatus, but only the receivers which are in tune with the transmitter sending the message can get it.

God's love sweeps out from his heart over all the world. It comes to the door of every life. There is not one person anywhere among all earth's families, however far off he may be, whom God does not love. But there are many who know nothing of that love, into whose hearts the consciousness of the love never comes. The message of grace is for all, but only those whose lives are in tune with the life of God, hear it. The divine summons is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith." In one of the psalms we read

"The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him ;

And he will show them his covenant."

Only those who fear God, that is, who love

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him, trust him, do his will, and are in accord with him, receive the secret revealings of his friendship.

The standard of spiritual attunement is the will of God. Every note is to be keyed to that, We are to learn to say always, "Thy will be done." In the Scriptures, good men are sometimes said to walk with God. That is, they go in God's way, think God's thoughts, and obey God's commandments. "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" All over the world saintly ones are walking with God all these common days. When he speaks they listen to his voice and answer, Yes. Their communion with him is never broken. The music in their hearts never ceases and is never jarred and spoiled by discords.

We cannot see God with our natural eyes, but if our hearts are in tune with his Spirit, we are conscious of his presence, and its blessing flows into our lives. Our beholding him does not depend on the darkness or the light. We can see flowers and trees and human faces only in the day, when the sun is shining. We can

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see the stars only at night, when the sun has gone down. But our seeing God depends on our own hearts. A little rhyme tells of a mother's talk with her child:

*“ It is dark, the night is come,
And the world is hushed and dumb ;
Sleep, my darling, God is here !—”*

“ Shall I see him, mother dear ?”

*“ It is day, the sun is bright,
And the world is laid in light ;
Wake, my darling, God is here !—”*

“ Shall I see him, mother dear ?”

*“ Not the day's awakening light,
Babe, can show thee God aright ;
Not the dark, that brings thee sleep,
Him can from my darling keep.*

*“ Day and night are his, to fill ;
We are his, to do his will ;
Do his will, and never fear ;
Thou shalt see him, baby dear.”*

Some good people have the impression that Christian joy comes only as the result of emotional experiences. No doubt there are those who are lifted up at times on the high tides of spiritual feeling. But really the only true basis for a glad life is obedience to the divine

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commandments. Jesus lived the perfect life. His joy was never broken. There was never any interruption in his communion with his Father. And the secret of his gladness was his patient, quiet, unbroken doing of the divine will. He said of his Father, "He hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him." Then he gave his disciples the secret of a joyous life in the words, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Could any teaching be plainer than this? We are in tune with God when we obey his words without question and when we acquiesce quietly and trustfully in his will. Disobedience always makes discord. It is so in music. When the singer or the player strikes a wrong note, the harmony is broken. It is so in life. So long as we are obedient, sweetly accepting God's way, however it may break into our way, patiently enduring pain, or sorrow, or loss, when God wills it so, we make pleasing

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music. But the moment we fail to obey some word of our Master's, or do some evil thing, or resist some pleading of love, or rebel against some hard experience, there is discord; at once we are out of tune with God and our joy is broken.

The object of all spiritual training is to bring our lives into tune with God. Toward this we strive in all our training and discipline. We begin very far away and at the best we are only learners. Heaven always keeps above us at our best. But we are living worthily only when we are getting a little more into the heavenly spirit every day. We never can enter heaven until we have brought heaven down into our hearts. We would not be happy there if we had not learned heaven's lessons before we go there. All the qualities of beautiful character set for us in the word of God are things that belong to the perfected life. Of a great artist one wrote:

*“ His face a mirror of his holy mind ;
His mind a temple for all lovely things to flock to
And inhabit.”*

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This should be true of every good life. Evil things should be cast out, and whatsoever things are lovely should have their home in the heart.

The life that is in tune with God is keyed to the note of love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Any unlovingness in thought, feeling, word, or act makes discord in the music of our life. We are brought into close, intimate, and unhindered relations with God, only as we have learned the lesson of love. This includes loving relations with men as well as with God. We are besought by Saint Paul not to grieve the Spirit of God. It is a startling thought that the Holy Spirit loves us enough to be hurt by anything we may do or may fail to do. The words which follow this exhortation show us how we may thus grieve the divine heart: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." This is the way to get in tune with God.

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We can please God and enjoy his favor only when we love. Any failure in loving interrupts the consciousness of God's presence. John Wesley wrote in his diary one day, "To-day I grieved the divine Spirit by speaking uncharitably of one who is not sound in the faith. Immediately I was in great darkness." We cannot keep the peace of God in our hearts unless our human relations are as they should be. We cannot claim to be Christians unless we love others. "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another." One of the benefits of prayer is that it keeps us in tune with God. A good man was overheard saying one night at the close of his devotions, "Dear Lord Jesus, we are on the same old terms." There was no discord in the music of his communion with Christ.

We are taught to pray always, after every request we make, "Thy will, not mine, be done." If we do this sincerely it will always bring us into complete agreement with God. When we first begin our pleading we may be insubmissive; at least we may not be ready to accept God's will and take up the burden of sorrow,

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disappointment, or trial, laid at our feet. But as we continue to pray, "Not my will, but thine, be done," gradually the struggle grows less intense and our mind comes more and more into the mood of quiet acquiescence, until at last all resistance has ceased and the peace of God fills our hearts.

We have a high example of this in our Lord's own pleading in Gethsemane. When he went away alone the first time his prayer was, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." But when he went away a second time and prayed, there was a marked change in his words: "My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done." Instead of a strong pleading, as at first, that the cup might pass, there was now an acceptance of the fact that it would not pass and an acquiescence in the Father's way. His will was coming into perfect acquiescence with his Father's.

The same is true in the history of many earnest prayers. We stand face to face with a

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great sorrow and we fall upon our knees and plead with God to spare us the grief. We are not rebellious, but it seems to us we cannot endure it. However, as we pray with all earnestness and importunity, yet in faith, and submissively, there comes into our hearts a strange feeling of trust, which deepens into peace, until we are ready to acquiesce in God's will without any further struggle. Our will has been brought into accord with God's.

This is the great work of life—to come into tune with God, to grow into such trust that we shall rest in God in the silence of love, so to lose our wills in God's that there shall never be any disharmony in our relations with God. The outcome of such a life of acquiescence is peace and joy.

“But I cannot do half those things,” said the bewildered new pupil to the teacher of physical culture, as the two stood together in the gymnasium. “I simply cannot do them at all.”

“If you could do them there would be little

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use in your coming here," was the reply. "You are here to learn how to do them."

We say we never can bring our lives into tune with God's. We think it will be impossible for us to learn to take God's way in all things quietly, joyfully, sweetly. But that is just what we are here for—to be fashioned into the likeness of Christ, to learn to live in perfect peace.

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